

Human-Centred Blended Citizens

A study of Digital Citizenship through Drama Pedagogy

A thesis submitted to fulfil requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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Statement of Originality

This is to certify that to the best of my knowledge; the content of this thesis is my own work.

This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or other purposes.

I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work and that all the assistance received in preparing this thesis and sources have been acknowledged.

Cathryn Irene Horvat

Dedication

For my Mum

The hands that guided me on my creative path, beginning with correcting my fingering on the piano keys.

The hands whose touch brought music to life; each note a beautiful reflection of her soul.

The hands that held me through dark and difficult days, loving me even through the hardest of times.

The hands that raised two fingers to her lips, creating the loudest, proudest whistle, encouraging me after every exam, performance, and song.

The hands that always placed others before herself, selflessly giving to all who needed her.

The hands that mothered, not just her own children, but mothered many.

The hands that grew cold as she battled cancer.

The hands that never held her extraordinary Grandchildren.

The hands I can no longer hold, and the ones I will never forget.

These were the hands that shaped me, that gave me life, and made me who I am.

Acknowledgement of Country

As you read my thesis, let me acknowledge the ongoing custodians of the lands on which this research and writing took place, beginning with Darug Country, where I live and work. I also acknowledge the Gadigal, Bidjigal, and Dharawal peoples, whose lands I walked while observing and gathering data for this work. Each of these lands holds a deep connection for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have cared for it for over 60,000 years, through age-old ceremonies of storytelling, art, music, dance, and renewal. This renewal speaks to the ongoing cycle of cultural preservation and revitalisation, ensuring that traditions continue to be acknowledged and passed down to future generations. The ongoing custodians of these lands, along with all Elders and Aboriginal people, hold the memories, traditions, and hopes of Aboriginal Australia, and I honour their enduring wisdom.

As a Gandanguurra descendant, I have always felt an unspoken connection to Country. From the green hills of Gundungurra land in Robertson to the profound sense of belonging I feel on Darug land, these places have shaped who I am. It was here, walking these lands, that I found clarity during the writing of this thesis. The creeks that flow gently through the landscape, the birds that sing their songs of place and time, and the stillness of the ponds grounded me when I needed it most. My walks reminded me of the connection between land and knowledge, and that this work is for the generations to come.

This sense of connection extends to my family. My youngest two sisters are proud Wiradjuri people, and my eldest sister lives on Ngorabul land. My family's connections also reach across oceans as well, with another of my sisters living on the lands of the Blackfoot people in Alberta, Canada. These places, woven together with the lands I now walk, have shaped us as individuals and remind us of the enduring power of Country.

As we progress in our education research, let us commit to placing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at the forefront of our minds. May we foster cultural awareness and deliver culturally relevant research, reflective of First Nations communities' rich heritage, diverse cultures, and languages. Through education, we honour the past and contribute to a future where the voices and knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are central to shaping educational practices and policies.

Appreciation

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisors, Professor Michael Anderson and Professor Kelly Freebody. Your wisdom, insight, and support have been instrumental in shaping this work. While you provided invaluable direction, you also trusted me with the creative autonomy to navigate the challenges and complexities of this research, allowing me to find my own voice and path. There were many times when imposter syndrome began to consume me, but your encouragement helped me push through the self-doubt and stay on track. Thank you for inspiring me with your knowledge and for being there with the right advice when I needed it most. This research reported in this thesis was supported by the award of a Research Training Program scholarship to the PhD Candidate.

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This journey occurred during an extraordinary period that none of us predicted: a global pandemic. Every plan was disrupted, every expectation shifted, and life as we knew it was reshuffled. In the midst of it all, I gave birth to my two incredible boys. Teddy and Monty, thank you for providing me with endless joy and motivation. Your names and favourite things, as well as those of my beautiful nephews and niece, are woven into this work in the form of the pseudonyms I created for the schools, teachers, and students. Every step of the way, you have been my inspiration.

To my loving husband, Matthew, thank you for being my absolute rock. On the days I wanted to give up, you walked beside me with our precious boys, steady and strong, never letting me fall. Every day, I am grateful for your kindness, your unwavering support, and your belief in me. Every day, I am thankful for you.

To my Dad, thank you for always cheering me on from the sidelines. To my sisters, family, friends, and colleagues, thank you for all stepping in and encouraging me when I needed it. An extra-special thanks to Aunty Ninny, who read this thesis from cover to cover, offering invaluable support, laughter, and friendship. I appreciate you very much. Brooke, Ally, Alex and Bek, also a huge thanks to you all for your help with the visualisation my findings.

This work is a reflection of the love, support, and guidance I have received from all of you. Thank you.

Abstract

As digital technologies become deeply embedded in the everyday lives of young people, the need for ethically grounded digital citizenship education grows increasingly urgent. Status quo digital citizenship frameworks typically emphasise technical proficiency or rules-based compliance (ISTE, 2016; Ribble, 2015), often overlooking the socio-emotional, ethical, and relational competencies essential for meaningful engagement across both physical and digital environments. To address this gap, this research introduces the concept of the *Blended Citizen*, an individual who engages responsibly across both physical and digital spaces and practices empathy, ethical awareness, and critical reflection. This concept builds on relational theories of identity and participation and is grounded in research that positions drama pedagogy as a space for ethical, reflective, and democratic learning (O'Connor & Freebody, 2022).

This qualitative comparative case study, informed by constructionist and social constructionist theories, was conducted across four NSW secondary schools to investigate how drama pedagogy fosters students' understanding and enactment of responsible digital citizenship. Drawing on Augusto Boal's work in *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979), the study explores how participatory drama techniques, such as Forum Theatre and Image Theatre, provide embodied and collaborative spaces for students to reflect on and critically unpack the social and ethical dimensions of their online and offline actions. The drama work was co-facilitated through the shifting role of the Joker, played at different points by teachers and students, to support shared authority and critical reflection. This structure also positioned students as active spect-actors, who engaged in collaboration, ethical inquiry, and social action (Neelands, 1992).

Data collected from classroom observations, interviews, and focus groups revealed that drama pedagogy fostered experiential learning, encouraging students to explore digital identities, consider the consequences of online behaviour, and negotiate complex ethical

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dilemmas, including online exclusion, the performance and negotiation of identity online, and the social consequences of behaviour within digital communities. The findings highlight how drama practices cultivate empathy, encourage democratic participation, and promote collaborative problem-solving. Students developed a dynamic and relational understanding of identity and interaction, enabling the cultivation of ethical digital behaviours through sustained reflection and engagement.

The study also captures evolving teacher perspectives, demonstrating how drama pedagogy repositions educators from knowledge transmitters to facilitators of ethical reflection and social learning. Teachers emphasised its role in supporting student wellbeing and nurturing critical awareness about digital participation. They acknowledged the complexity and uncertainty of students' lived digital realities.

Overall, this research contributes to the intersecting fields of digital citizenship and drama education by advocating for an integrated pedagogical model. It calls for policy and curriculum frameworks to move beyond restrictive, compliance-based approaches towards ones that prioritise human-centred socio-emotional learning and ethical engagement. It recommends that educational policies in NSW and beyond expand to support the development of *blended citizens*, not as a rigid framework or contract, but as an evolving way of being grounded in empathy, responsibility, and critical awareness.

Drama pedagogy is proposed as a vital methodological and philosophical approach that equips students to navigate and shape the digitally blended world they inhabit, fostering relational, reflective, and socially responsible digital participation.

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Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

This glossary provides brief introductory definitions of terms, concepts, and acronyms used throughout this thesis. For detailed thesis-specific definitions and deeper explanations, see Chapter 1 (**section 1.4**).

ACARA	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority: independent body developing national curricula and assessments.
ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research: independent, not-for-profit research organisation creating and promoting research-based knowledge and services to improve learning.

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Agency	Capacity of individuals to make choices and act independently within social contexts.
AI	Artificial intelligence: computer systems performing tasks requiring human intelligence.
Applied Theatre	Theatre practices used outside traditional settings to address social issues and encourage dialogue.
Catharsis	Emotional release experienced by participants or audiences during or after dramatic engagement, especially in Boalian or drama therapy contexts.
Character	A fictional persona created or adopted in dramatic performance or role-play, often with specific motivations, background, and context.
Convention	An established dramatic strategy used to structure action, guide meaning-making or shape engagement. Examples include teacher-in-role, hot-seating, freeze frames, and thought-tracking.
Cyber Hygiene	Practices that support digital safety, privacy, wellbeing, and responsibility. The term reflects how individuals conceptualise and enact protective and ethical behaviours in digital spaces.
DoE	Department of Education: state government agency overseeing public education.
Drama Pedagogy	Teaching approach using participatory drama to explore issues, develop real-life skills and foster empathy.
Embodiment	The physical enactment of ideas, roles, or emotions in drama, allowing participants to explore and express meaning through the body.

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Ensemble	A group of performers who work collaboratively and non-hierarchically. In schools, the term also refers to class-based groupings in devised work.
Form	A type of dramatic structure or practice used to explore ideas and engage participants (e.g., Forum Theatre, Invisible Theatre).
Forum Theatre	A dramatic form developed by Boal where a scene of oppression is performed and then replayed with audience interventions to change the outcome. Designed to empower participants as agents of change.
Hot-seating	A convention where a character (played by a student or teacher) is questioned by others to reveal motivations, feelings, or background.
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies: digital tools and systems used for communication, learning, and information management.
Improvisation	The spontaneous creation of dialogue and action without a script. Common in classroom drama to explore ideas or perspectives.
Image Theatre	Boalian form where participants create still, sculpted body images to explore abstract ideas or social issues through nonverbal expression.
Invisible Theatre	A Boalian form where scenes are staged in real-life settings without the audience's knowledge, provoking authentic, unscripted responses.
ISTE	International Society for Technology in Education: professional organisation providing tech-integration standards.
Joker	The facilitator in Forum Theatre who guides action and encourages participation, supporting reflection without imposing interpretation.

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Metaxis	The simultaneous awareness of existing both inside the dramatic world and outside it as oneself.
Mirroring	A drama technique where one participant physically reflects the gestures, posture or emotion of another. Often used within Image Theatre to build empathy, raise awareness of body language, and explore power dynamics.
NESA	NSW Education Standards Authority: authority setting curriculum and certifying teachers in NSW.
NSW	New South Wales: Australian state and research context for the thesis.
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development: international body that shapes evidence-based policies to foster prosperity, equality and well-being in Education.
Participatory Learning	A learner-centred approach involving active engagement through drama, group work, open questioning, and peer collaboration.
PDHPE	Personal Development, Health and Physical Education: mandatory K-10 subject in NSW aimed at empowering students to lead healthy, safe and active lives.
Playbuilding	A process of devising original performance material collaboratively, often based on themes or real-world issues relevant to the participants.
Praxis	The intersection of theory and practice; in drama education, refers to reflective, participatory action to explore and apply ideas.

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Role	The adoption of a character or position within drama, used to explore a particular perspective or context.
Role-play (Drama)	A strategy in which students adopt roles to explore an idea, issue, or situation. Often used in devised or scripted classroom drama.
Role-play (Boalian)	Used within <i>Theatre of the Oppressed</i> , where participants re-enact power-laden scenarios to rehearse resistance or social transformation.
Sculpting	A technique where a participant positions another (or themselves) into a still image to represent an idea, emotion or relationship. Common in Image Theatre and process drama to symbolise abstract concepts like conflict, status or oppression.
Social Masks	A conceptual and theatrical metaphor describing the roles or personas individuals adopt in social or digital life. The term captures how people perform curated versions of identity online for safety, social acceptance, or power.
Spect-actor	A Boalian term for audience members who intervene in the action, shifting from passive viewers to active participants.
Style	The aesthetic or pedagogical approach within a dramatic form, such as participatory, collaborative, or issue-based styles. Describes the tone or aesthetic approach of a dramatic form (e.g., non-naturalistic, Boalian), guiding how content is presented and experienced.
Tableau / Freeze Frame	A drama technique where participants use still images with their bodies to represent a moment, idea, or emotion, often used for analysis or transition.

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- Teacher-in-Role** Drama convention where the teacher adopts a character to guide inquiry and model behaviour.
- Technique** A specific tool or action within a convention or form such as sculpting; used to explore or express ideas within dramatic work.
- UNESCO** United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization: UN agency promoting international cooperation and policy in education, science, culture, and communication.
- VET** Vocational Education and Training: career-focused education, courses and training that equips learners with practical skills for specific industries.

1 Introduction

If we as educators recognise that a phone is no longer just a phone but an integrated series of creative tools, then the opportunities are only limited by the power of the tool and our management of the tool in the classroom. This re-evaluation will be critical if educators and schooling systems are to redesign learning spaces to make them more amenable to creativity and collaboration. (Cameron & Anderson, 2009)

The world we live in today is characterised by an interweaving of physical and digital spaces. As educators, we must reframe how we view digital devices, they are no longer simply tools for communication but gateways to vast, dynamic, and participatory environments that shape how we learn, interact, and engage with the world. These devices represent an integrated¹ series of creative tools that, when properly used, open up new possibilities for fostering creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking in the classroom (Cameron & Anderson, 2009). The challenge, however, lies in managing the use of these tools effectively and shaping the digital environments they create within an ethical framework.

Existing literature on digital citizenship often emphasises technical proficiency and online safety, presenting these as foundational skills for students in a rapidly changing digital landscape (Ribble, 2015). This focus overlooks the socio-emotional competencies needed for ethical and empathetic engagement in digital spaces. These include empathy, ethical reflection, and critical thinking - essential skills for navigating the complexities of digital interactions in the blended world (Pangrazio & Sefton-Green, 2021). Pangrazio and Sefton-Green (2021) emphasise that socio-emotional competencies, such as empathy and ethical

¹ While I use and quote the terms “integrated” and “integrated learning” in this research, I acknowledge its complex and contested history. For many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the terms may carry associations with policies of forced assimilation that undermined cultural identity and sovereignty (Wilson, 1997). In the context of arts education, “integration” is also debated, with concerns around tokenism and the dilution of disciplinary integrity (Bautista, Tan, Ponnusamy, & Yau, 2016; May & Robinson, 2016). Throughout this thesis, I use the term sensitively and with critical awareness to describe a blended approach that combines drama pedagogy, digital contexts, and collaborative learning, without diminishing the distinctive role of Drama as a key learning area.

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decision-making, are central to equipping students to engage critically with digital literacies. These literacies transcend functional technical skills to address the nuanced challenges of online engagement and foster social responsibility. This gap suggests the need for research into pedagogical approaches that develop these competencies alongside technical skills (O'Connor & Freebody, 2022; Sutton et al., 2024).

Despite recent attempts by the NSW Department of Education and the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) to strengthen students' digital capabilities, educational policies remain predominantly focused on technical skills, such as coding and online safety, while neglecting ethical, empathetic, and reflective practices. These frameworks continue to face challenges in addressing the socio-emotional dimensions of digital life, as demonstrated in the NSW curriculum. The Capabilities and Priorities² outlined in the NSW curriculum emphasise functional skills such as digital literacy (NESA, 2024a). However, they provide limited direction on explicitly embedding socio-emotional learning across subject areas.

These competencies are vital for supporting students in engaging meaningfully with a human-centred online world. Frameworks such as the Digital Citizenship in Schools framework (Ribble, 2015) highlight key aspects of digital engagement but often rely on rule-based, compliance-driven models that lack the depth necessary for meaningful participation in the digital world.

This research responds to these gaps by examining how drama³ pedagogy, with its focus on reflection, role exploration, and perspective-taking, supported the development of both technical literacy and the social-emotional skills needed to navigate the digital world responsibly (Bhukhanwala, 2014; O'Connor & Freebody, 2022). By engaging with real-world

² Capabilities and Priorities in the NSW curriculum refer to essential skills and focus areas, such as critical thinking, ethical understanding, and intercultural awareness, which are integrated across various subjects to enrich student learning experiences (NESA, 2024a).

³ The capitalised form "Drama" is used when referring to the school subject (e.g. "Drama" in the curriculum). The lowercase "drama" is used when referring to drama pedagogy, such as "drama for learning," or to the art form more generally.

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digital dilemmas through drama, students can explore ethical decision-making and empathy, fostering skills that extend beyond traditional approaches.

The urgency of this issue is evident. Recent findings from the Australian Child Maltreatment Study reveal that 7.6% of Australians aged 16–24 experienced non-consensual image sharing in childhood, and 17.7% were subjected to online sexual solicitation by an adult before the age of 18 (Walsh et al., 2025). These experiences often begin before the age of 15, with girls and gender diverse youth disproportionately affected, and can result in enduring emotional, psychological, and legal consequences (2025). This research investigates how drama pedagogy, with its emphasis on empathy and ethical reflection, may provide students with meaningful opportunities to examine these challenges and navigate the digital world more responsibly.

As digital technologies continue to redefine traditional educational models, it has become increasingly clear that technical proficiency alone is insufficient. Students must understand the ethical implications of their actions in the digital space, develop empathy for others in their physical and online interactions, and navigate the blended world as responsible digital citizens. This research addresses these needs by examining how experiential learning through drama can cultivate human-centred digital citizens capable of making thoughtful and ethical decisions.

1.1 Personal Journey

My passion for student wellbeing has always been at the core of my work as a teacher. Long before I became a Year Advisor⁴, I was already committed to using the arts to support student welfare. My upbringing in an open-door foster family exposed me to the transformative potential of the arts from an early age. I witnessed firsthand how the arts

⁴ A pastoral care role in NSW public schools responsible for the wellbeing and support of a specific year group. Year Advisors work with school leadership teams to provide advice and guidance to students, act as a point of contact for parents, and coordinate support for academic, social, and personal challenges.

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could help children from diverse, traumatic or unknown backgrounds express themselves, heal emotional wounds, connect with others, and develop their own sense of identity.

My professional journey further reinforced this personal connection to the arts. Coming from a family with generations of professional musicians and music educators, I grew up surrounded by creative expression. After completing my Bachelor's degree in Theatre and Communication, I pursued a Master's in Theatre, which led me to receive an education scholarship with the NSW Department of Education and complete my qualifications for teaching secondary education. When I finished university, my teaching experience covered multiple subjects, including Drama, Music, English, and Entertainment (VET)⁵, with an occasional class in Visual Arts. I had the opportunity to teach these subjects in diverse teaching locations, ranging from rural and remote NSW to metropolitan areas, and I had an overseas stint in South Korea. This diverse experience made me question how effectively I was utilising drama to engage students across such varied contexts, and ultimately inspired me to explore why drama seemed to work so well in fostering both engagement and personal growth. It was this desire to understand the underlying reasons for how and why drama impacted student engagement and wellbeing that planted the seeds for my research journey.

One of the most influential experiences in my career came during my time as a Year Advisor in a Western Sydney high school. I had taught there for five years before becoming a Year Advisor, then spent four years in that position working with students facing substantial social and behavioural challenges. It was in this role that I began to use drama to help students manage their emotions and resolve conflicts to improve behaviour for disengaged students. I started noticing that in my Drama classroom, students were becoming more open and honest, often reporting that they felt I was giving them a chance to be 'seen' when they had often felt 'unseen' and 'unheard' in other subjects or with other teachers.

⁵ Entertainment is a Vocational Education and Training Course (VET).

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One student, Derrick⁶, left a particularly lasting impression on me. Derrick was a 'popular' talented footballer with a national scholarship, passing most of his subjects but excelling in Drama. Drama had given Derrick an outlet to express his emotions, connect with others, and build his confidence, however, in Year 10, Derrick made a digital mistake that would change the life goal he was already working towards. He filmed himself engaging in a consensual act with a female student and shared the video with friends via social media. Now distributed to others, this act became a serious legal issue, with Derrick losing his scholarship and facing both criminal and social consequences. His bright future seemed to unravel before his eyes due to a single impulsive decision he made online.

During this difficult time, I worked closely with Derrick and his family, supporting them as they figured out the incident's legal challenges and emotional fallout. As I had built a strong rapport with them, I was one of the few teachers they trusted in what became a very isolating time. Unfortunately, this did not have a happy ending and Derrick lost his football scholarship, his job outside of school, and he struggled to adjust to the disciplinary actions that followed. In my view our education system failed students like Derrick by not adequately addressing the realities of online behaviour in the digital age.

This pivotal moment drove me to question how we, as an education system, could better support students like Derrick in developing the ability to use digital platforms responsibly and compassionately. It made me want to learn more about our current approach and consider how we could redesign digital citizenship education to better address the realities and needs of today's students. Derrick's experience is not an isolated case, but rather representative of broader challenges faced by students today in navigating the complexities of the digital landscape. His experience, like many others, revealed a critical gap in how schools address the intersection of digital engagement and social responsibility.

⁶ Derrick's name and certain details of his situation have been changed to protect his identity and maintain confidentiality.

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As a parent raising children in this age of digital interconnectedness, this reflection became even more personal. I wondered how we could ensure that my own sons, and all young people, have the skills to navigate the digital landscape thoughtfully, ethically, and with empathy. What was missing in our educational system, and how could we fix it? This question fuelled my desire to explore how drama pedagogy might serve as a pathway to better prepare students for these complexities.

My role as a curriculum leader and contributor to policy development within the NSW Department of Education further informs this reflection. My professional experience has allowed me to understand the limitations of existing syllabuses and frameworks for addressing the intersection of digital engagement and social responsibility. Students like Derrick represent individual cases and systemic gaps in how schools approach digital citizenship education. These gaps highlight the need for innovative strategies that embed socio-emotional learning within digital literacy frameworks. Drama pedagogy offers a pathway to address these challenges through its effectiveness in fostering socio-emotional learning (Freebody, 2022; O'Connor, 2010). By grounding this research in personal and professional experiences, I aim to contribute to the broader educational discourse and drive systemic improvements through actionable insights for policy and practice.

1.2 The Gap in Digital Citizenship Education

Despite the increasing integration of technology in schools, there is still no comprehensive cross-curricular content in NSW that adequately addresses digital citizenship. The introduction of coding electives and policies like Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) have expanded students' technical skills, yet these initiatives have not addressed digital engagement's ethical and social responsibilities. The OECD Learning Framework 2030 (2018) emphasises that digital skills and knowledge are as essential as physical health and mental wellbeing in today's world; however, even though we are in the middle of a

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curriculum reform in NSW, the majority of syllabuses still fail to address the realities of online interaction, digital footprints, or the permanence of one's online presence.

This gap is also reflected in national discussions on civics education. The 2025 inquiry report *From Classroom to Community* found that current civics programs are fragmented, lack relevance, and fail to equip students with the digital and political competencies required for meaningful participation in contemporary society (Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, 2025).

Some recent updates in NSW curriculum reform signal a growing awareness of these issues:

- Drama 7-10 Syllabus - to be implemented from 2026, students will learn about safe, respectful and inclusive interactions online and in person (NESA, 2024b).
- Technology 7-8 Syllabus - to be implemented from 2026, students will learn about secure methods to share data and information safely online, and safe practices when using and developing digital and communication technologies (NESA, 2024d).
- Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE) K-10 Syllabus - to be implemented from 2027, students will learn to identify and practise protective strategies to prevent and manage power imbalances online, including cyberbullying, abuse, grooming, sexual extortion, image-based abuse and negative social interactions (NESA, 2024c).

While these updates represent essential progress, they are limited to specific subject areas and fail to offer a comprehensive cross-curricular approach encompassing digital citizenship's technical and social-emotional dimensions. The reforms currently target only certain aspects of digital literacy across the curriculum without including the broader, interconnected skills needed for a well-rounded, responsible citizen in a digital world.

For their whole curriculum approach, NESA has redefined the previously referred to 'Learning Across the Curriculum' or 'Cross-Curriculum Priorities' into what are now

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collectively known as 'Capabilities and Priorities' (NESA, 2024a). While related to the Australian Curriculum's General Capabilities, NESA's approach adapts these concepts to align with NSW's educational framework. The 'Capabilities' in this framework include skills like digital literacy, critical and creative thinking, and ethical understanding, while the 'Priorities' focus on thematic areas such as Civics and Citizenship. These capabilities are embedded across subjects but are not explicitly formally assessed or tracked, making them easier to overlook. Research has critiqued the inconsistent integration and lack of clear assessment strategies for general capabilities in the Australian Curriculum and their NSW adaptations (ACER, 2020; Gilbert, 2019). Gilbert (2019) outlines that these skills are often treated as supplementary to subject content, leading to their undervaluation in practice. Similarly, the ACER report (2020) stresses the need for cohesive frameworks to support the alignment of curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment for capabilities like ethical understanding and socio-emotional learning. In NSW, the 'Capabilities and Priorities' aim to integrate these components within subject areas; however, significant gaps remain in achieving this goal. They are outlined below:

- Digital literacy: This capability encompasses the knowledge, skills, and understanding students need to access and contribute to the world around them, including developing a socially responsible digital identity. Students are encouraged to connect, communicate, and collaborate in a digital environment while being informed about the ethical aspects of technology use (NESA, 2024a).
- Civics and Citizenship: This priority helps students deepen their understanding of government, law, and their roles as responsible, active citizens, but it does not directly engage with the digital aspects of citizenship (NESA, 2024a).

NESA emphasises that these capabilities should emerge naturally from subject content and should not be separately taught, assessed, or reported on (NESA, 2024a). The lack of explicit assessment frameworks means that while embedded in subject content, general capabilities such as digital literacy and socio-emotional skills often remain underdeveloped in

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practice (Council of Europe, 2019; Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, 2025).

This is particularly true for socio-emotional competencies, which require targeted approaches to ensure their integration across disciplines (Freebody & Finneran, 2021b).

Without this focus, students risk missing opportunities to engage critically and ethically with digital technologies (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004).

This leaves a considerable gap, as without explicit teaching and assessment, students may not receive the depth of understanding required to become fully informed, ethical digital citizens. In response to this gap, the NSW Department of Education developed a Digital Citizenship website (NSW Department of Education, 2018) that provides resources for teachers; however, these resources remain mostly isolated from syllabuses outcomes and lack cohesive integration across key learning areas. As a result, the sample lesson plans primarily focus on responsible online behaviour, particularly in relation to social media, rather than offering a more comprehensive understanding of students' broader digital responsibilities.

Despite widespread internet access among students, the emotional toll of this access is increasingly apparent. According to the eSafety Commissioner (2021), 44% of Australian teenagers reported a negative online experience in the last six months, with 15% experiencing online threats or abuse. The gap in digital citizenship education reflects broader systemic challenges in aligning curriculum content with the socio-emotional and ethical skills students need to navigate the digital world responsibly (ACER, 2020; Price, 2022). These challenges impact student wellbeing and their ability to thrive as responsible digital citizens.

To try and alleviate the growing concerns around online bullying and digital distractions, NSW schools introduced a ban on mobile phones in 2024. This policy aimed to mitigate these issues by removing devices from classrooms, however, the *Review into the non-educational use of mobile devices in NSW schools – report* (Carr-Gregg et al., 2023) raises questions about whether banning technology outright addresses the cause. While this policy

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removes mobile phones from classrooms, it fails to address the underlying issues of digital literacy and responsible use. As the report notes, students are still engaging with digital platforms outside of school hours without the necessary guidance on how to manage their behaviour when online (2023).

The government's rationale centred on reducing distraction, limiting opportunities for cyberbullying, and protecting student wellbeing (NSW Department of Education, 2023; NSW Government, 2024). Policymakers argued that "clearing classrooms of unnecessary distractions" would improve academic outcomes, support teachers, and create "a level playing field" for all students regardless of background or device access (2024). The ban applies during class time, recess, and lunch, with implementation strategies including lockers, phone pouches, or drop-off points, while exemptions remain for medical and learning needs (2023). While these aims address genuine concerns, they also highlight a policy tension: restrictions may reduce immediate risks, but they do not equip students with the critical skills required to navigate technology responsibly (Carr-Gregg et al., 2023).

When students are in attendance in a NSW school, engagement with digital technology is mediated through Department of Education infrastructure, internet filters, and device policies. While young people may have wide access to social media and digital platforms in their private lives, access in schools is deliberately limited and structured, reflecting jurisdictional responsibilities that extend only to the school day (Carr-Gregg et al., 2023). Schools can regulate students' technology use during the school day, yet this authority does not extend into their private lives. This divide reflects a wider seismic shift in human interaction, where learning, identity, and participation is blended across digital and physical spaces in ways that extend the reach of school policy.

The distinction between private and school-based digital practices is central to understanding the scope of digital citizenship education. At the Australian federal level, the *Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Bill 2024*, which was passed in November 2024, requires social media platforms to take reasonable steps to prevent under-

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16s from holding accounts. This legislative change is not supported by broader educational strategies to develop young people's ethical engagement with these platforms (Australian Government, 2024). As the eSafety Commissioner's *Behind the screen transparency report* (2025) further suggests, banning access alone does little to prepare students for the complexities of the digital world. Prohibiting access may remove immediate risks, but it does not equip young people with the critical thinking or reflective skills needed to navigate those risks. This tension between risk reduction and skill-building is also at the centre of ongoing debates internationally, as governments look to balance prohibition with preparation for digital citizenship (Carr-Gregg et al., 2023). Recent discussions in the United Kingdom, for example, have explored the introduction of nationwide phone bans, citing similar concerns about wellbeing and distraction (UK Department for Education, 2024).

Debates about bans have been further shaped by popular texts such as Dr Jonathan Haidt's *The Anxious Generation* (2024), which argues that the rise of social media has coincided with increased youth anxiety and advocates for delaying access to platforms. While Haidt's claims have been influential in public and policy discussions, recent education and psychology research has directly challenged his conclusions. Leading scholars argue that the book relies heavily on correlational evidence, extrapolates beyond what the data can support, and neglects the broader context of adolescent wellbeing (Dienlin, 2024; Ferguson, 2025; Odgers, 2024; Odgers & Jensen, 2020). These publications emphasise that the literature does not support straightforward causal links between digital media use and youth mental health, and that oversimplified narratives risk diverting attention from more complex social, economic, and developmental factors. Recognising these debates is important, but as this thesis argues, an educational response is needed that equips young people to critically and ethically engage with digital contexts, rather than relying solely on restriction. Bans may reduce risks, but they do not teach the skills students need to navigate the online world responsibly. This research explores the possibility that drama pedagogy offers a proactive

alternative, providing students with opportunities to rehearse and reflect on digital practices in ways that a ban cannot.

Crockett and Churches (2017) have criticised the restrictive policies that schools and governments often employ, such as Acceptable Use Policies. These policies limit engagement without offering the depth of understanding students need to navigate the complexities of the online world. As a result, students may retreat from learning rather than engage with it in meaningful ways. In contrast, this research explores whether drama pedagogy, with its deep and reflective engagement, could offer an alternative approach to teaching digital citizenship.

By drawing on the work of Augusto Boal, this study seeks to explore how drama pedagogy can be used to teach digital citizenship in a way that fosters cognitive and emotional engagement. The study will investigate how drama can encourage students to reflect on their online behaviours, develop empathy for others in digital spaces, and ultimately become responsible, ethical digital citizens. This research drew on the u.b.do program (NSW Department of Education, 2019b), a digital citizenship resource developed by the NSW Department of Education, which provided the teaching and learning framework for the study (see **Appendix 6**). The program was authored by drama teachers for the Department. This study examined how it was enacted in classroom practice.

1.3 Research Aims and Questions

This research is driven by three overarching questions, each of which seeks to explore a different aspect of how drama pedagogy can contribute to digital citizenship education:

1. Teacher Knowledge of Digital Citizenship: How do teachers in NSW interpret, understand, and approach digital citizenship?
2. Drama Pedagogy for Wellbeing and Prosocial Behaviour: How can drama pedagogy impact a student's understanding of citizenship in a blended human-centred and online world?

3. Classroom Interactions in Online Drama Pedagogy: How do teachers and students interact within the classroom when experiencing and participating in drama pedagogy?

These questions aim to fill the existing gap in digital citizenship education by integrating social-emotional learning through drama pedagogy. By focusing on empathy, ethical behaviour, and digital wellbeing, this study seeks to offer a more comprehensive framework for digital citizenship education, which is currently underexplored in both policy and academic research. In responding to these research questions, this study adopts a qualitative approach grounded in drama pedagogy and informed by both social constructionist and constructionist principles.

This study employed a comparative case study design with qualitative research methods to explore how drama pedagogy could enhance students' understanding of digital citizenship. Data was collected through teacher interviews, classroom observations, and student focus groups in four New South Wales (NSW) public high schools⁷, offering in-depth, real-world insights into the impact of drama pedagogy on student behaviour and learning across physical and digital spaces. The comparative case study approach enabled an investigation of how drama pedagogy influenced digital citizenship in diverse educational contexts, allowing for authentic and contextualised findings.

The study adopted social constructionist and constructionist theories, asserting that students construct their identities through social interactions and learning experiences (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Papert, 1987). Drawing on Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979), the research draws on participatory and reflective learning experiences to explore how they can foster empathy, ethical decision-making, and responsible digital citizenship (O'Connor, 2010; Stevenson, 2010). These theoretical foundations provide a basis for understanding how

⁷ In NSW Australia, public high schools operate within a state-administered government education system managed by the NSW Department of Education. These schools provide free education to students from Year 7 (approximately 12–13 years old) to Year 12 (17–18 years old), for diverse populations across metropolitan, regional, and rural areas of the state.

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drama empowers students to navigate human-centred and digital environments with greater awareness and agency. To clarify the conceptual framing of the research questions, the following section defines key terms that underpin the study's exploration of citizenship in both physical and digital contexts.

1.4 Definitions

1.4.1 *Citizenship Defined*

The Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) states that:

Citizenship can be formally defined as the legal relationship between an individual and a state. More broadly, citizenship is the condition of belonging to social, religious, political or community groups, locally, nationally and globally. Being part of a group carries with it a sense of belonging or identity which includes rights and responsibilities, duties and privileges. These are guided by the agreed values and mutual obligations required for active participation in the group. In the Australian Curriculum citizenship incorporates three components – civil (rights and responsibilities), political (participation and representation) and social (social values, identity and community involvement). (ACARA, 2012, p. 2)

Further to the definition above, the Council of Europe describes citizenship as:

... the skill we need to live well in a family and community. It shows us how to resolve disputes in a friendly and fair way, how to negotiate and find common ground, and how to make sure that our rights are respected. A democratic citizen knows about the ground rules of the society they live in and the personal responsibilities they need to respect. (Council of Europe, nd, as cited in Davies, 2013).

These definitions outline the multifaceted nature of citizenship, encompassing legal, social, and ethical dimensions. They frame citizenship as a dynamic construct that fosters belonging, mutual respect, and active participation within a community.

Ian Davies (2013) expands on this by emphasising the economic and moral significance of studying citizenship, particularly when interactions between students from different cultures occur. These interactions, facilitated by digital tools, promote mutual understanding and respect by bridging physical distances. Terms like ‘good citizens’ frequently emerge in education resources and definitions to describe individuals who participate responsibly in society; however, these terms often lack precision, with perceptions of good citizenship varying widely across cultural and personal contexts (Davies, 2013; Reichert, 2016).

Considering these ambiguities, the term fails to capture the ethical and participatory dimensions required in contemporary citizenship education. In response to these challenges, this research reframes the concept as ‘human-centred citizens,’ providing a more focused understanding. Human-centred citizenship emphasises ethical and responsible engagement across physical and digital spaces. Waghid (2018) supports this shift by advocating for a critical and participatory approach to citizenship education that promotes democratic engagement through reflective practices and meaningful learning experiences. Human-centred citizens actively interact with people, places, and objects, whether face-to-face or through digital platforms, while recognising their roles and the impact of their actions within interconnected environments (ACARA, 2012). This approach places empathy, responsibility, and human interaction at the core of citizenship, addressing the complexities of living in a blended world.

1.4.2 Digital Citizens Defined

Defining digital citizenship is contestable. Vowe & Henn (2016) describe digital citizenship as adopting safe and responsible behaviours when interacting within an online world dominated by media and networked devices. While that definition identifies key behaviours, it is limited in scope for the direction of this research. In contrast, Ribble (2017) offers a more layered definition, describing digital citizenship as “... a comprehensive look at how individuals actively solve problems and participate in online platforms, communities, and networks,” which includes “... understanding the significance and permanency of online choices...”

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(Curran & Ribble, 2017, p. 36). 'Permanency', in this context, refers to the enduring nature of digital footprints, where students develop an "...extensive, searchable identity" and understand that "...they are 'Google-able'" (Coiro et al., 2011). For this reason, this research uses the term 'digital tattoo' to highlight the permanent nature of an individual's digital identity trail; as McTaggart (2015) states, "Footprints can be washed away ... Online, this is not the case".

While the permanency of online behaviour is a critical component, digital citizenship also requires recognising the global interconnectedness of online interactions and the ethical responsibilities within these spaces (Curran & Ribble, 2017). Crockett and Churches (2017) argue that an online global perspective must be integral to the concept, aligning with ACARA's (2012) emphasis on understanding social values and community involvement. Mattson (2016) extends this idea, suggesting that digital citizenship must move beyond individual responsibility to include active, justice-oriented participation, reflecting the shared responsibilities of digital communities. This perspective acknowledges the broader implications of ethical and responsible participation in online networks.

This research adopts a definition of digital citizenship encompassing three key dimensions: the implications of online behaviour (Curran & Ribble, 2017; Ribble, 2015), the permanence of digital identity (McTaggart, 2015; Pangrazio & Sefton-Green, 2021), and the ethical and participatory responsibilities inherent in global online interactions (Mattson, 2016). This framing highlights the need for ethical, socially aware, and active engagement in digital spaces, positioning digital citizenship as a bridge between physical and digital contexts. Educational frameworks must equip students to navigate both domains responsibly, reflecting broader societal changes and the integration of physical and digital interactions (Mattson, 2016; Pangrazio & Sefton-Green, 2021; Ribble, 2015).

The evolving nature of citizenship reflects broader societal changes, including the increasing integration of physical and digital interactions. The literature review accompanying this

research will further explore how these definitions inform pedagogical practices and their implications for fostering ethical and participatory digital engagement.

1.4.3 Research Defined Definition of Digital Citizen

This research defines digital citizenship as respectfully belonging to an interconnected online global community. Digital citizens are digitally active individuals who contribute, participate, influence, and interact with people, places, and objects while demonstrating intercultural understanding, responsibility, and ethical awareness online (ACARA, 2012; Crockett & Churches, 2017; Heick, 2013; Mattson, 2016; Ribble, 2015).

1.4.4 Blended Citizen

In the context of this research, a blended citizen is an individual who navigates both physical and digital spaces with responsibility, ethics, and empathy. This concept recognises the interconnected reality of modern life, where online and offline experiences are intertwined, influencing identity and social engagement (Katz et al., 2021; Pangrazio & Sefton-Green, 2021). Katz et al. (2021) outline how younger generations perceive digital and physical worlds as extensions of one another, interconnecting their actions and identities across both spaces. Pangrazio and Sefton-Green (2021) also outline how these interactions influence identity and social engagement, emphasising the need to harmonise physical and digital identities to foster ethical engagement and active participation in diverse communities (Ribble, 2015).

A blended citizen is conscious of their digital identity, understands the impact of their online behaviours, and actively contributes to society through face-to-face interactions and online communities. This term highlights the need for inclusivity and ethical decision-making, with blended citizens recognising the duality of interconnected online and offline worlds (Curran & Ribble, 2017; Mattson, 2017; Pangrazio & Sefton-Green, 2021). Blended citizens navigate the duality by balancing individual agency with collective responsibility in the physical and digital shared spaces (Katz et al., 2021).

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The idea of the blended citizen aligns with integrating technology into learning and social spaces. By engaging in socially responsible, flexible, and interconnected experiences, blended citizens promote awareness, collaboration, and mutual respect (Katz et al., 2021; O'Connor & Freebody, 2022). This perspective provides a framework for understanding how these dual contexts shape the principles and practices of digital citizenship education.

1.4.5 Human-Centred

In this research, the term 'human-centred' builds on principles from human-centred design in education and management, which prioritise fostering resilience, wellbeing, and ethical engagement (Brooks et al., 2017; Essens et al., 2023). Central to this concept is a focus on human interactions, empathy, and social responsibility across both physical and digital exchanges.

A human-centred approach puts 'humans first', focusing on how people engage, react, and connect with others. It emphasises empathy, respect, and a conscious awareness of the impact one's actions have on others, whether in face-to-face encounters or online interactions. Essens et al. (2023) argue that fostering psychological safety and resilience is essential for building meaningful connections, reinforcing the need for environments prioritising human wellbeing and ethical decision-making. A human-centred citizen embodies these principles by actively striving to cultivate positive, meaningful relationships in personal and collective spaces, placing human connections and wellbeing at the core of their decisions.

This definition aligns with the ethical dimensions of digital engagement, as explored by Pangrazio and Sefton-Green (2021) and Ribble's (2015) focus on socially responsible behaviours online. Considering these insights, a human-centred approach addresses the complexities of ethical and empathetic engagement in the interconnected world. It emphasises the value of nurturing relationships that bridge digital and physical environments, encouraging shared understanding through meaningful connections.

1.5 Research Significance

The significance of this research lies in its potential to shape future educational policies and practices in NSW, and to inform broader national and international discussions on digital citizenship education. As students and teachers increasingly rely on technology, the need for effective digital citizenship education will continue to grow. By investigating the potential of drama pedagogy in this context, this study aims to provide a model for how it could enhance a student's digital literacy, ethical behaviour, and social responsibility. This research also contributes to the broader field of drama education by exploring innovative uses of theatre to foster pro-social behaviour. The findings may have implications for educators, policymakers, curriculum designers⁸, and researchers interested in the intersection of arts education and digital learning. The following section outlines the structure of the thesis and how each chapter contributes to addressing the research questions.

1.6 Thesis Structure

This thesis is organised into several chapters, each addressing a key aspect of the research:

Chapter 1: Introduction (this chapter) overviews the research aims, significance, and theoretical framework. It introduces the research questions related to drama pedagogy for digital citizenship education.

Chapter 2: Literature Review – critically examines the existing research on digital citizenship, focusing on three key areas: the current state of digital citizenship education, the role of drama pedagogy in fostering prosocial behaviour, and the theoretical foundations of Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979) as they relate to ethical and social learning in a blended human-centred world.

⁸ NSW syllabuses are developed by the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA), which adopts the Australian Curriculum developed by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA). For this reason, this thesis refers to NESA syllabuses, while acknowledging their foundation in the national curriculum.

Chapter 3: Methodology – outlines the theoretical framework and the research design which adopts a qualitative approach. This chapter outlines the case study methodology, including the data collection methods through observations, interviews, and focus groups across four public schools.

The Findings are broken into four chapters exploring how drama pedagogy impacts students' understanding of digital citizenship.

- **Chapter 4: Introducing Digital Citizenship through Drama Pedagogy** – introduces digital citizenship through drama pedagogy, focusing on the initial implementation and reactions from teachers and students.
- **Chapter 5: Initial shifts in Student Perceptions and Behaviours** – explores the shifts in student perceptions and behaviours, detailing how drama pedagogy helps students critically engage with digital citizenship.
- **Chapter 6: Development of Key Concepts and Competencies** – focuses on the development of key competencies such as empathy and ethical decision-making.
- **Chapter 7: Impact and reflections** – reflects on the overall impact of the program, offering insights into how the pedagogical approach fosters responsible, human-centred digital citizenship.

Chapter 8: Conclusion – reflects on the implications of the findings for educational policy and practice and suggests areas for future research.

2 Literature Review

This research investigates how teachers in NSW understand and approach digital citizenship, focusing on how drama pedagogy can enhance students' understanding of citizenship in both human-centred⁹ and online spaces. To provide a comprehensive foundation for this study, I organise the literature review into three key categories:

1. **Current knowledge and practice of digital citizenship in schools:** How digital citizenship is understood and implemented in schools, unpacking the terminology, knowledge, and pedagogical approaches, including the shift from rules-based models toward more participatory and reflective approaches.
2. **The role of drama pedagogy in promoting prosocial behaviour and citizenship:** How drama fosters ethical decision-making, empathy, and prosocial behaviour through collaborative and reflective learning that supports students' engagement as responsible citizens in both physical and digital contexts.
3. **An exploration of Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed*:** How Augusto Boal's critique of theatre as social control informed approaches that support students to rehearse ethical decisions, explore identity, and reflect on social and digital citizenship.

Each section contributes a distinct layer to the review's overall argument. The first examines how digital citizenship is framed and applied in schools. The second turns to drama pedagogy as a potential response to the limitations of these approaches. The final section focuses specifically on Boal, tracing how his methods extend the pedagogical possibilities into embodied, participatory action.

2.1 Current Knowledge and Practice of Digital Citizenship in Schools

The first section reviews literature on how digital citizenship is currently understood and addressed in schools, examining both the conceptual foundations and pedagogical

⁹ Citizens who interact with other humans in person with empathy when socialising and building connections.

approaches that shape its implementation in teaching and learning programs (Mossberger et al., 2008; Pangrazio & Sefton-Green, 2021; Ribble, 2015). While rules-based frameworks such as Mike Ribble's model provided a structured approach to digital conduct, emerging critiques highlight the limitations of these models in addressing the more dynamic and ethical complexities of online citizenship. This section introduces the key concepts that inform digital citizenship, setting up the discussion of more participatory and ethical approaches to digital education explored later.

2.1.1 From Rules-Based to Participatory Models of Digital Citizenship Education

Pioneering digital academic Mike Ribble refers to 'digital citizenship' as “the norms of appropriate, responsible behaviour with regard to technology use” (Ribble, 2015). While this definition is concise, it lacks a clear reference to critical aspects such as belonging to an online community, ethics, and the social values that shape the personalities of digital citizens. Mossberger et al. (2008) characterise digital citizenship as “the ability to participate in society online,” emphasising not just access or skills, but inclusion in civic and economic life. Their definition positions digital participation as a matter of equity and democratic capacity, reflecting a broader understanding of citizenship as engagement, opportunity, and belonging in the digital age. Participation in the online world means students communicate and interact across invisible national and cultural boundaries, often with global audiences and consequences that extend well beyond their immediate communities. Taken together, these perspectives highlight a shift from regulating online behaviour to examining how individuals participate in shaping digital environments and shared public discourse. This broader conceptualisation of digital citizenship as participatory and relational, challenges the limitations of rules-based models and opens space for reimagining how students engage as civic actors in digitally mediated communities.

The key role of community was further emphasised by Frank Reichert (2016) who found that Australian adolescents' perspectives of good citizenship were strongly influenced by their culture and lifestyle, suggesting that community involvement shapes how young people

conceptualise citizenship. By omitting these factors, Ribble's research and framework raises several questions about its ability to capture digital citizenship's broader, more nuanced aspects such as social identity, ethical responsibilities, and interactions within the online community, which are crucial in modern digital contexts (Pangrazio & Sefton-Green, 2021).

Ribble's (2015) framework has nonetheless become a widely adopted reference point in digital citizenship education. Its structured, accessible approach has positioned it as a staple in many policy frameworks and continues to influence school-based understandings of digital citizenship. The model groups digital behaviours into nine elements, organised under the overarching themes of Respect, Educate, and Protect, forming a 'guide' for teaching digital conduct and online responsibility (2015). These elements are revisited in more detail later in this section, where their implications for classroom practice and student agency are discussed. While widely adopted and accessible, this framework is predominantly rules-based and overlooks essential social and ethical considerations, such as the role of empathy, collaborative problem-solving, and engagement with social justice, which are critical for fostering responsible and active digital citizens (Pangrazio & Sefton-Green, 2021). Despite these limitations, Ribble's model continues to serve as a useful reference, particularly as a springboard for critique and further development within evolving educational contexts (Curran & Ribble, 2017; Heath, 2018). Recognising these limitations reveals that digital citizenship is an evolving, contested concept, with definitions shifting over the last two decades (Curran & Ribble, 2017; Heath, 2018; Pangrazio & Sefton-Green, 2021; Ribble, 2015).

As digital citizenship frameworks evolve, so too must our questioning of the commonly occurring terminology within digital citizenship education. The terms 'digital natives' and 'digital immigrants' were introduced by Prensky (2001) and were expanded further for educational purposes in Mike Ribble's textbook *Digital Citizenship in Schools* (2015). While these terms provided a foundational understanding of the digital divide, they contributed to Ribble's framework, which emphasises behavioural norms. These terms have since been

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widely critiqued for oversimplifying generational differences in technology use (Borst, 2017; Stevens, 2013). By categorising students as naturally tech-savvy 'natives' and teachers as 'immigrants' to the digital world (Prensky, 2001), these terms reinforce a false binary that overlooks the complexities of digital literacy and technological engagement across both groups (Gazi, 2016). The limitations of these binary terms highlight the need for pedagogical approaches that recognise the diversity of digital experiences among both students and teachers. Rather than assuming competence or deficiency based on age, more reflective and collaborative models of digital literacy are needed, approaches that support shared exploration, ethical reflection, and inclusive participation.

Challenging this generational generalisation further, Ribble's own teaching materials claimed to present a 'teaching solution' for digital citizenship that relies heavily on rules-based, teacher-delivered lesson plans. This approach contradicts the assumption that students are inherently more proficient with technology, suggesting instead that teachers are often framed as the authoritative source of digital knowledge. In practice, however, scholars Stephen and Henrietta (2018, pp. 108-110) argued that teachers are increasingly using Web 2.0¹⁰ tools to engage students, complicating the assumption even further that students are always more tech-savvy. This evolving understanding of digital literacy dynamics invites reconsideration of rigid generational categories and encourages exploration of collaborative and reflective approaches, which are explored in the following section of the literature review.

While assumptions about generational digital competence are increasingly challenged, the model Ribble proposes maintains a behavioural framing. His *Digital Citizenship in Schools* (2015) offers schools a structured foundation for teaching digital engagement; however, its 'textbook guide' approach, while widely used, often implies a 'one-size-fits-all' solution that may not resonate with students in diverse educational contexts (Boyle, 2010; Gazi, 2016; Pangrazio & Sefton-Green, 2021). As Gazi (2016) notes, models focused on fixed

¹⁰ "Collaborative, and interactive, cloud-based tools, usually free across the internet" (Stephen & Henrietta, 2018). For example, Facebook, YouTube, Google Drive and Wikipedia.

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behaviours can limit the internalisation of digital citizenship, particularly when students are disconnected from the social and ethical dimensions underpinning the content. This disconnection can contribute to disengagement in classroom learning, particularly when students fail to see the relevance of prescribed content to their everyday realities.

The risk of disengagement is supported by findings from Hooghe et al. (2016), who observed that students are more likely to disengage from citizenship education when the learning context feels irrelevant or removed from their lived experience. In response, Gazi (2016) advocates for experiential and collaborative approaches that invite students and teachers to explore digital responsibility together, not as a list of rules, but as a relational, evolving practice. Choi (2016) offers a complementary perspective through her multidimensional model, which reframes digital citizenship around four interwoven dimensions: ethics, media and information literacy, civic participation, and critical resistance. Rather than treating students as passive recipients of instruction, such models encourage them to take an active role in shaping the digital spaces they inhabit.

Extending these ideas, Radovanović (2024) foregrounds ethical self-awareness as central to digital literacy, arguing that students must be equipped to navigate the values that inform their online identities and social interactions. These perspectives converge in their call for a shift away from prescriptive frameworks and towards pedagogies that are dialogic, reflexive, and responsive to complexity.

From this view, developing digital citizenship is about ensuring safe online behaviour and cultivating critical, informed participation in digital life. Such an approach requires learning experiences that promote adaptability, collaborative meaning-making, and the capacity to examine emerging technologies through ethical and civic lenses (Pangrazio & Sefton-Green, 2021). Integrating digital literacy and citizenship into the curriculum at all levels ensures that students engage meaningfully and develop a holistic understanding of their roles as digital citizens across all Stages of education (Gazi, 2016).

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Heick's (2013) research supports a similar shift, suggesting that digital citizenship education should focus on developing self-monitored habits through the online platforms students already engage with, as this strategy can lead to more meaningful and sustained learning outcomes. For this to occur, Gazi (2016) argues that teacher training in digital literacy is crucial, encouraging teachers to model responsible behaviour alongside their students when participating in complex ethical challenges in the digital world. Teachers' self-efficacy and digital competence play a critical role in the learning process, directly influencing their ability to guide students in responsible digital citizenship (Choi et al., 2018). My research responds to these challenges by exploring how drama pedagogy might offer a space for students and teachers to collaboratively model scenarios that support reflection on personal beliefs and societal influences. This method considers personal, psychological, technological, and social factors (Ali et al., 2023), fostering a deeper understanding of digital citizenship.

Despite a growing body of research advocating for more nuanced approaches, many conventional models of digital citizenship education continue to rely heavily on textbook-based and rules-driven methods. Such approaches often fail to reflect the dynamic and ethical complexities of digital participation (Boyle, 2010; Gazi, 2016; Pangrazio & Sefton-Green, 2021). To prepare students as responsible global citizens, a more integrated and cross-disciplinary approach is needed, one that embeds digital literacy across subject areas. This enables learners to engage critically with technology and society and contribute to broader discussions about ethics, culture, and responsibility (Gazi, 2016). In contrast to behaviour-focused approaches, the Council of Europe's *Digital Citizenship Education framework* (2019) offers an alternative rights-based vision that encourages learners to co-create digital cultures rather than simply abide by them. This approach reframes digital citizenship as an ethical, relational, and participatory practice grounded in values of inclusion, expression, and shared responsibility. Instead of positioning digital citizenship as the delivery of static information, the Council calls for pedagogies that actively engage

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learners in ethical dialogue, collaborative decision-making, and meaningful participation in diverse online communities.

While frameworks such as the Council of Europe's promote participatory and relational approaches, Ribble's model remains firmly embedded in many school-based programs. Its continued presence in policy, curriculum, and teaching resources calls for closer examination. While often positioned as student-centred, Ribble's framework follows a standardised, discipline-oriented structure that may restrict opportunities for ethical reflection, creativity, and student agency (Boyle, 2010; Curran & Ribble, 2017). The nine elements, originally introduced under the themes of Respect, Educate, and Protect, reveals content structured more on digital safety and compliance than participatory digital engagement.

These elements encompass various aspects of digital participation, such as digital access, communication, and literacy. The principles of respect, educate, and protect are integral to these elements, highlighting ethical behaviour, knowledge acquisition, and proactive measures for online safety and wellbeing. They guide students in understanding respecting others, acquiring necessary digital skills and knowledge, and protecting themselves and their digital content. The nine elements (Ribble, 2015) are:

1. Digital Access – Electronic participation in society. RESPECT
2. Digital Commerce – Electronic buying and selling of goods. EDUCATE
3. Digital Communication – Electronic exchange of information. EDUCATE
4. Digital Literacy – Learning about the use of technology and sharing this information.
EDUCATE
5. Digital Etiquette – Standards of conduct or procedures, consideration of others.
RESPECT
6. Digital Law – Laws, rules, and policies that govern the technology. RESPECT

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7. Digital Rights and Responsibilities – Requirements and freedoms extended to everyone in a digital world. For example - Reporting cyberbullies, threats and inappropriate behaviours. PROTECT
8. Digital Health and Wellness – Physical and psychological wellbeing in the digital world. PROTECT
9. Digital Security – Precautions for the safety of information and data. PROTECT.

Framed around a 'do not do' learning approach, the elements of digital citizenship focus on teaching students what not to do in the online environment. This approach aims to educate them about the potential dangers online, stressing the importance of respecting others, following online rules, and protecting themselves and their digital content. Ribble argues, "Students can be expected to make mistakes when using technology, but through modelling and direction, they need not make the same mistake twice" (Ribble, 2015, p. 2). While these elements have informed many digital citizenship policies in schools, their execution in a classroom may limit a student's growth as blended citizens. Rather than encouraging active engagement, reflection, and exploration of positive citizenship roles, a 'do not do' framework primarily focuses on avoiding negative behaviours.

The structured emphasis on compliance within Ribble's model is reminiscent of what Westheimer and Kahne (2004) term the "personally responsible" citizen: one who follows rules but is rarely invited to critique systems or act collectively. Their typology, which also includes "participatory" and "justice-oriented" citizenship, reveals the limitations of models that stop short of engaging students in critical social discourse. While Ribble's framework may offer a practical starting point, its narrow focus risks reinforcing passivity rather than fostering agency. These distinctions reinforce the need to move beyond surface-level digital etiquette and consider how educational frameworks might cultivate civic reasoning and justice-oriented dispositions in young people. This emphasis on behavioural control limits the development of more participatory and reflective learning experiences, those that foster

experiential learning, critical reflection, and student agency (Anderson & Dunn, 2013; Neelands, 2009).

While limited in its scope, Ribble's model has still informed widely adopted tools that attempt to measure students' preparedness for digital engagement. As the primary researcher and leader of digital citizenship (1970–2020), Ribble provides a complementary perspective to the focus on critical awareness and reflection in digital citizenship by introducing structured methods to assess students' readiness to navigate digital spaces. In *The Effectiveness of a Digital Citizenship Curriculum in an Urban School* (Boyle, 2010), Boyle used Ribble's *Digital driver's licence*¹¹ to assess how effectively the teaching resources prepared students for the digital world. The *Digital driver's license* aims to help students master digital skills through scenarios and vignettes while checking for a baseline understanding of digital citizenship. However, the study concentrated on evaluating student behaviours within the classroom and did not measure how the program influenced students' behaviours outside of school. As a result, it did not capture whether the program had a lasting impact on students' digital citizenship in their personal lives, leaving a gap in understanding its broader effectiveness beyond the school environment (Boyle, 2010; Mattson, 2016).

By structuring the research on Ribble's elements through one centralised program such as the *Digital drivers licence* the results reflected student knowledge of the elements rather than their roles as citizens in an online world (Boyle, 2010). While the content within those elements is essential, Mattson (2017) cautioned that focusing exclusively on this structured approach might not create a lasting impact on student wellbeing. Extending these concerns, Smale and Hill (2016) argue that preparing students for the digital world requires more than student-targeted wellbeing programs; instead, they propose a whole-school, principal-focused approach. Their research advised principals to reevaluate negative approaches and promote blended teaching and learning opportunities for digital citizenship. Unlike Ribble's

¹¹ The Digital drivers licence was developed by Mike Ribble for K-12 students, with a series of learning modules addressing how to recognise and react to precarious situations online, such as cyberbullying and copyright infringement (Swan & Park, 2012).

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student-targeted program, Smale and Hill's (2016) findings suggested that school-wide strategies led by principals had a broader impact on behaviour. Their study, undertaken between 2015-2018, found that the median age of students engaging online was 12.6 years; though, some parents reacted negatively to the findings, framing the issue of youth online engagement in a simplistic 'good vs. evil' narrative, where they viewed technology as inherently harmful. Despite these concerns, the research results did not support this perspective. The data indicated that more than 12% of students changed their behaviour on social networking sites after the program, 25% showed more respect online and avoided cyberbullying, 41% posted less personal or revealing information, and 57% reflected on and changed their behaviour online. While the 12% figure may seem modest, these results suggest broader behavioural changes, indicating that a holistic approach to digital citizenship can produce meaningful shifts in students' online engagement.

Within this evolving critique, Kirsten Mattson (2016, 2017) offers a participatory model of digital citizenship that reframes digital engagement as an opportunity for ethical collaboration and empowerment. Her work challenges the dominant focus on control and compliance, instead advocating for pedagogies that promote ethical participation and student agency. In her book *Digital Citizenship in Action* (2017), she encourages all teachers to consider how they can help their students see the internet as a positive influence in their lives, rather than as a negative. Mattson (2016), in her doctoral research titled *Moving Beyond Personal Responsibility: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Digital Citizenship Curricula*, found that the majority of digital citizenship programs were shaped by fear.

...in schools stemmed from social change, legislation, and public opinion regarding technology that came from a place of fear. Not only did lawmakers and schools act upon a fear of change, but they also acted upon a fear of the unknown, and a fear of losing control. (Mattson, 2016, p. 244)

Mattson's (2016) findings support the concept that teachers need to relinquish control within the classroom for meaningful learning of digital citizenship. Despite their intention to protect

students, many digital citizenship programs continue to be shaped by institutional fears. James (2014) suggests that students often interpret these efforts as mechanisms of control rather than empowerment, a perspective reinforced by Mattson's (2016, 2017, 2024) findings on the discursive roots of digital fear. Both researchers argue that such models may limit student voice by framing the digital world as inherently dangerous and students as guilty transgressors. These critiques challenge the assumption that risk aversion cultivates responsibility and instead point to the need for pedagogical models that resist deficit narratives and promote ethical awareness, self-regulation, and critical engagement in students' digital lives.

To address this, Mattson's (2016) research suggests that students need to:

- engage in experiential learning by taking risks
- be supported to interact with and understand the online world
- reflect on errors of judgement and instances of good practice
- repeat constructive behaviours as informed digital citizens, demonstrating understanding of ethical engagement across both online and offline environments.

Her model promotes active and informed digital citizenship by encouraging schools to adopt participatory approaches. These approaches allow students to contribute, collaborate, and create in the online world, empowering them to become responsible members and contributors to digital communities (Gardner & Davis, 2013).

2.1.2 Perceived Benefits of Drama Pedagogy for Digital Citizenship Education

Following the critique of dominant digital citizenship models, this section examines how drama pedagogy is understood to support ethical decision-making, collaboration, and active participation. The discussion outlines its perceived benefits and provides the conceptual grounding for the research undertaken in this study. Drama pedagogy refers to the use of dramatic processes such as role play, improvisation, and collaborative performance as teaching and learning approaches across the curriculum. In NSW, Drama is taught as a

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subject within the Creative Arts Key Learning Area (KLA), where students learn through making, performing, and appreciating dramatic works (BOS, 2003; NESAs, 2024b). Alongside its place as a school subject, drama can be used pedagogically in other curriculum areas to foster skills in communication, collaboration, and ethical engagement (O'Toole et al., 2009).

Drama pedagogy could provide a participatory and reflective framework that engages students in ethical decision-making and social interaction, fostering active exploration of online interactions' complex ethical and social dimensions (Freebody & Goodwin, 2018; Neelands, 2009; Schaedler, 2010). As O'Connor and Freebody (2022) outline, roleplay and improvisation allow students to navigate interpersonal and societal dynamics, reflecting real-world ethical dilemmas within a safe, collaborative environment. Through these experiential activities, students may consider the immediate implications of their choices and reflect on broader social and ethical responsibilities.

Beyond fostering ethical awareness, engaging in drama also fosters empathy and critical reflection, which are fundamental for cultivating responsible digital citizenship (Munday, 2014; O'Connor & Freebody, 2022). Jefferson and Anderson (2017) emphasise critical reflection as a key competency in 21st-century education, essential for enabling students to critically evaluate their assumptions, navigate complex social interactions, and make ethical decisions in blended environments. Their emphasis on transformative educational practices highlights reflection and collaboration, aligning with drama pedagogy's participatory nature in fostering ethical and socially responsible behaviour. Gleason & von Gillern (2018) similarly discuss that participatory practices, such as digital storytelling and civic discussions, enhance students' understanding of digital citizenship by linking their online behaviours to broader social and ethical responsibilities. Drama pedagogy builds on these participatory practices, offering dynamic and experiential opportunities for students to engage with digital citizenship's ethical and social dimensions, fostering deeper reflection and meaningful learning experiences (Boal, 1979; Howard, 2004).

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Unlike rule-based frameworks, drama allows students to reflect on their values, tackle real-world scenarios, and embody the roles of responsible citizens (Neelands, 2009). Through this approach, I aim to demonstrate that experiential learning rooted in collaboration, critical thinking, and social interaction could help students internalise the principles of digital citizenship more effectively, suggesting that drama pedagogy may offer an avenue for promoting deeper learning and personal growth beyond the limitations of standard digital citizenship policies.

This pedagogical potential aligns with recent global education reforms, particularly those led by the European Commission, which highlight the need for more integrated and reflective approaches to digital education. The *Digital Education Action Plan* (2021) and *Enabling Digital Education and Providing Digital Skills* (2023), highlights the increasing global recognition of the need for comprehensive digital education. The Commission's proposals emphasise equipping individuals with the necessary digital competencies and fostering critical thinking, creativity, and ethical engagement with technology, skills essential in today's digital landscape (Gleason & von Gillern, 2018). The first proposal focuses on adopting a comprehensive government approach to digital education to address persistent barriers to digital competency acquisition. The second proposal addresses the need for inclusive, high-quality digital education that enables students to develop their understanding of digital responsibility and social participation. Together, these initiatives call for integrating digital competencies within broader educational contexts, promoting a more holistic, reflective approach to digital citizenship. Drama pedagogy has the potential to uniquely facilitate this, offering students the opportunity to critically engage with ethical dilemmas and apply digital skills in practical, collaborative scenarios that mirror real-world challenges (Bhukhanwala, 2014; Zembylas, 2022). It reflects the growing recognition that education must go beyond technical skills to include ethical decision-making, collaboration, and critical engagement with technology (Cameron & Anderson, 2009; Gursel-Bilgin, 2022; Howe, 2019).

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While these policy-driven initiatives provide a critical framework for promoting digital citizenship education at a systemic level, translating them into meaningful classroom practice requires pedagogical approaches that are innovative and responsive to students' social and creative capacities. Drama-based methods offer one such approach, enabling students to engage in collaborative meaning-making, develop reflective habits, and explore digital literacies in action (Jefferson & Anderson, 2017). Cameron, Anderson, and Wotzko (2017) argued that educators and policymakers frequently overstate young people's inherent digital literacy and that restrictive approaches to digital education stifle students' creativity and innovation. They emphasise that digital literacies are not simply about the technical use of tools but should also promote a deeper understanding of how technology intersects with identity and creativity. Their research, discussed in *Drama and Digital Arts Cultures*, highlights how authentic drama strategies can allow students to explore and experiment with their digital identities. By engaging in role play and performance, students can critically navigate digital spaces, develop self-awareness, and envision "...realistic visions of the authentic future" (2017). Unlike conventional digital education methods that often limit experimentation, drama pedagogy could create a dynamic and experiential space for students to engage more meaningfully with technology, promoting critical thinking and creativity.

In contrast to both policy directives and rule-based digital frameworks previously critiqued, my research avoids the conventional or common 'rules-based' approach. Instead, it will explore the effectiveness of using drama to engage with digital citizenship concepts, contrasting it with more traditional literature-based methods that focus on individual reflection and personal experience (Babbage, 2004). Through drama, this research investigates how engaging with digital citizenship can provide a unique, interactive learning experience, allowing students to actively participate, embody, and explore the complexities of digital citizenship in a more immersive and experiential way.

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When considering how drama might respond to these challenges, it is useful to look to international frameworks that position digital citizenship learning as grounded in creativity, ethical agency, and collaboration. The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE, 2016) outlines seven standards, described as characteristics, that define the attributes of an ideal digital learner:

1. Empowered Learner
2. Digital Citizen
3. Knowledge Constructor
4. Innovative Designer
5. Computational Thinker
6. Creative Communicator
7. Global Collaborators.

Together, these characteristics represent the skills and dispositions students need to navigate and contribute meaningfully to a digitally connected world. The ISTE Standards (ISTE, 2016) prioritise creativity, critical thinking, ethical participation, and collaboration, principles that resonate strongly with the interactive, reflective nature of drama pedagogy (Brooks-Young, 2017; Cameron & Anderson, 2009; ISTE, 2016). These principles of active, values-driven learning find practical enactment through drama pedagogy, by offering a method for students to actively embody and engage with digital citizenship's ethical and social dimensions (O'Connor & Freebody, 2022). Through structured collaborative scenarios and roleplaying, students can actively engage in critical thinking and problem-solving exercises that reflect the ethical challenges of digital spaces, as outlined in the ISTE standards (Brooks-Young, 2017; ISTE, 2016). For instance, roleplaying activities may encourage students to adopt the 'Digital Citizen' role by managing their digital identities and practising ethical behaviour in online interactions. This experiential approach reflects ISTE's broader goals of helping students thrive in a digitally connected world of rapid technological developments.

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Brooks-Young (2017) highlight how the ISTE standards provide essential guidance for educators in adapting their practices and pedagogy to accommodate ongoing technological advancements. By integrating drama pedagogy, teachers could support these standards by fostering an interactive and reflective learning environment where students actively engage with the complexities of digital citizenship (Cameron & Anderson, 2009). Drama's participatory nature may allow students to explore the ethical dimensions of their digital actions in real-time, offering a more immersive way to develop critical digital literacy.

To better understand how these standards translate into classroom practice, it is useful to examine how the 'Digital Citizen' standard, one of the core characteristics outlined by ISTE (2016), is structured. Brooks-Young (2017) outlines four conceptual categories or approaches for positive, active engagement with digital citizenship contexts. They are:

1. Cultivating and managing digital identities
2. Awareness of individual action
3. Recognition of safe and positive interactions
4. Recognising the responsibility of property and managing personal data (Brooks-Young, 2017, p. 12).

Drama pedagogy, through roleplaying and reflective practices, provides students with opportunities to engage with these concepts in real-world scenarios (Boal, 1979; Cameron & Anderson, 2009). By embodying the roles of responsible digital citizens, students can critically reflect on the consequences of their digital actions, deepen their understanding of ethics and empathy, and cultivate these values in both human-centred and online worlds (Boal, 1979; Brooks-Young, 2017; Mattson, 2016; O'Connor & Freebody, 2022). This alignment between drama pedagogy and digital citizenship standards provides a foundation for fostering prosocial behaviour (Neelands, 2009; O'Connor, 2010; O'Connor & Freebody, 2022), which is essential for supporting students in becoming responsible blended citizens. By integrating these methods, teachers can help bridge the gap between digital literacy and

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social responsibility in ways that connect meaningfully with students' lived experiences across digitally blended spaces.

The following table outlines how the benefits of drama pedagogy align with the ISTE Standards (2016), providing a framework for integrating digital citizenship concepts into the classroom.

Table 2.1

Benefits of Drama Pedagogy and Their Alignment With the ISTE Standards

Drama Pedagogy Benefits	Alignment with ISTE Standards
<p>Encourages student agency</p> <p>Drama empowers students to make decisions, take ownership of their learning, and reflect on their choices, fostering independence (Cameron & Anderson, 2009; Freebody, 2022; Neelands, 2009).</p>	<p>Empowered Learner</p> <p>Students take ownership of their learning by setting personal goals and reflecting on their progress toward achieving them (ISTE, 2016).</p>
<p>Promotes ethical understanding</p> <p>Drama provides a safe space for students to explore ethical dilemmas and practice responsible behaviour (Anderson & Dunn, 2013; Boal, 1979, 1995; Cameron & Anderson, 2009; Freebody, 2022; O'Connor & Freebody, 2021).</p>	<p>Digital Citizen</p> <p>Students act safely, ethically, and responsibly in digital environments, understanding their rights and obligations as digital participants (ISTE, 2016).</p>
<p>Fosters critical thinking and problem-solving</p> <p>Drama enables students to analyse complex issues, reflect on different perspectives, and explore creative solutions. These activities help students build the capacity for reflective judgment and effective decision-making in diverse scenarios (Cameron & Anderson, 2009; Jefferson & Anderson, 2017, 2021; Mattson, 2016; O'Neill, 1995).</p>	<p>Knowledge Constructor</p> <p>Students critically curate information, construct meaningful knowledge, and apply it in real-world contexts (ISTE, 2016).</p>

<p>Fosters creativity and iterative thinking</p> <p>Drama encourages students to imagine, create and refine imaginative solutions through creative processes, fostering innovative thinking (Cameron & Anderson, 2009; Jefferson & Anderson, 2017, 2021; O'Toole et al., 2009; Zakopoulos et al., 2023a).</p>	<p>Innovative Designer</p> <p>Students use creative processes to design and test innovative solutions to real-world problems (ISTE, 2016).</p>
<p>Encourages analytical and critical thinking</p> <p>Drama develops analytical thinking by immersing students in structured and unstructured scenarios that require identifying problems, examining causes, and testing strategies for resolution. This iterative process nurtures systematic reasoning and adaptability (Babbage, 2004; Boal, 1995; Cameron & Anderson, 2009; Freebody, 2022; Mattson, 2017).</p>	<p>Computational Thinker</p> <p>Students develop strategies to solve complex problems using analytical thinking and digital tools (ISTE, 2016).</p>
<p>Develops communication skills</p> <p>Drama encourages students to express complex ideas, emotions, and narratives effectively, using innovative techniques to engage and connect with diverse audiences (Jefferson & Anderson, 2017, 2021; O'Connor, 2010; Orlovich, 2024).</p>	<p>Creative Communicator</p> <p>Students express ideas clearly and effectively through various media and formats (ISTE, 2016).</p>
<p>Enhances collaboration and teamwork</p> <p>Drama promotes collaboration by engaging students in shared creative projects that rely on teamwork, mutual respect, and the appreciation of diverse perspectives. These activities foster intercultural understanding and build skills for effective communication and cooperation in diverse environments (Anderson & Dunn, 2013; Cameron & Anderson, 2009; Neelands, 2009; O'Connor, 2010; O'Connor & Freebody, 2021; Orlovich, 2024).</p>	<p>Global Collaborator</p> <p>Students work effectively with diverse teams, respecting cultural differences and using technology to collaborate on shared goals (ISTE, 2016).</p>

As outlined in Table 1, integrating drama pedagogy with ISTE Standards (2016) supports the development of critical digital literacy by fostering a deeper understanding of ethical responsibilities in digital and social contexts. This alignment highlights the versatility of

drama pedagogy in equipping students with the skills and perspectives needed to navigate the complexities of a digitally connected world. The next section will explore how drama could encourage prosocial behaviour, offering strategies for guiding students toward responsible digital citizenship.

2.2 The Role of Drama Pedagogy to Promote Prosocial Behaviour and Citizenship

This part of the literature review examines the effectiveness of drama as a pedagogical tool for students, fostering reflection, self-understanding, and awareness of their societal roles. It considers different conventions and forms of drama, while highlighting the contributions of influential pioneers in drama pedagogy and their impact on social change through education. Drawing upon constructionist and social constructionist theoretical perspectives, this part of the literature review will explore the drama process, focusing on key pedagogical practices that support prosocial behaviour, critical thinking, and ethical engagement, as exemplified in the work of Dorothy Heathcote, John O'Toole, Jonothan Neelands, and introducing Augusto Boal. It also investigates how this process facilitates a learning experience that supports the development of digital citizenship, by utilising diverse conventions and forms.

The literature explored in this section positions drama pedagogy as a reflective and collaborative mode of learning that connects ethical citizenship with educational practice. It resonates with participatory models of digital citizenship that emphasise active engagement, mentorship, and ethical reflection, moving beyond rule-based instruction toward authentic, student-centred learning (Mattson, 2017, 2024). Together, these perspectives suggest how drama pedagogy may support students in making sense of citizenship, shaping their capacity for ethical awareness, contribution, and participation in the online world.

2.2.1 Drama Pedagogy and Learning for Social Change

Dramatic inquiry serves as a pedagogy that transforms our understanding of ourselves and others (Boal, 1979; Heathcote & Bolton, 1995). Edminston and Towler-Evans (2022) suggest that through dramatic inquiry, "we can become more of the people that we desire to be in

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life, while collaborating in classroom communities to transform our world so that it may become more humanising." This perspective highlights the potential for drama to promote self-awareness, collaboration, and ethical engagement, which are key aspects of digital citizenship (Boal, 1979; Edminston & Towler-Evans, 2022; Heathcote & Bolton, 1995; Neelands & Goode, 2000; O'Connor, 2010). To demonstrate the effectiveness of drama pedagogy in exploring digital citizenship, it is essential to examine relevant research highlighting its benefits in fostering prosocial behaviours and ethical awareness. In the drama community, many acknowledge that drama pedagogy effectively enhances students' understanding of themselves and the world (Neelands, 2009; O'Toole, 1992). Historically, drama has been utilised in early-learning classrooms and integrated throughout the curriculum to promote children's comprehension of moral values (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995; Neelands, 2009). O'Toole refers to this learning process as a 'pedagogy of enlightenment' (O'Toole, 2022, pp. 66-67). When engaging in this dramatic play, students take risks, ask reflective questions and gain insights into their decisions, identity, and roles as citizens.

O'Toole (2022) extends this understanding by referencing John Carroll's statement at the 1995 IDEA World Congress, which emphasised that drama begins with emotions and then connects to intellectual development. Carroll argued that addressing emotional illiteracy in schools is critical, as drama provides a space where students can express their voices and challenge power imbalances in education (as cited in O'Toole, 2022). This closely aligns with Freire's notion of raising critical consciousness, where emotions, dialogue, and reflection work together to empower students to examine social structures and their roles within them (Freire, 2018; Suzina & Tufte, 2020). Like Freire's approach, drama engages students emotionally and intellectually, cultivating social agency through critical engagement.

This relationship between emotion and reflective agency is further elaborated by Dunn, Bundy, and Stinson (2015) who examine how emotional experiences in drama can shape critical understanding and social insight. In their chapter, they outline the role of emotions in participatory drama and highlight how emotional engagement provokes critical

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consciousness, leading to deeper social understanding, intellectual growth, and the potential for social change. They distinguish between first-order emotions, the immediate responses experienced during an event, and second-order emotions, which arise as participants reflect on these experiences through imagined or fictional scenarios (Bundy et al., 2015, pp. 42-43). By generating both types of emotional responses, participatory drama enables students to engage more deeply with complex social issues, encouraging reflection and collaboration (Bundy et al., 2015; Freebody & Goodwin, 2018; Neelands & Goode, 2000).

In discussions of narrative strategies that promote prosocial development, researchers in communication and media studies often turn to approaches such as entertainment-education (EE). Although EE shares certain aims with drama pedagogy, it originates in strategic communication rather than education and is widely used to promote prosocial behaviours through narrative storytelling (Obregon & Tufte, 2014). While participatory drama actively involves students in shaping meaning through embodied exploration, EE typically relies on pre-produced media such as radio dramas or television serials, offering limited opportunities for direct audience involvement (Obregon & Tufte, 2014; Schaedler, 2010). However, several scholars identify intersections between EE and participatory forms of theatre, positioning approaches such as Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979) as aligned with EE's goals when used to actively involve communities in reshaping narratives and engaging in collective problem-solving (Babbage, 2004; Obregon & Tufte, 2014, pp. 175-176; Suzina & Tufte, 2020). These participatory forms of EE align more closely with the aims of process drama and *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979), which foster critical consciousness and personal agency through collaborative storytelling (Schaedler, 2010; Suzina & Tufte, 2020). This comparison highlights the unique position of drama pedagogy within education, as a reflective tool and a co-constructed practice deeply embedded in learning.

Participatory drama invites students to reflect on social issues and actively co-create narratives, empowering them to explore and challenge societal structures within a safe and imaginative space (Bundy et al., 2015; Sutton et al., 2024). This active participation is key to

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promoting emotional engagement, agency, and critical consciousness (Freebody & Goodwin, 2018; Neelands & Goode, 2000). Bolton (1984) builds on this idea by suggesting that meaningful learning is unlikely without emotional involvement, supporting the idea that drama fosters deeper intellectual and emotional development. Together, these perspectives outline the potential for drama to integrate emotions and cognition, offering a holistic educational approach that nurtures emotional literacy and intellectual development.

By acknowledging the power of drama to tap into emotions and facilitate intellectual engagement, O'Toole's justification reflects his specific vision for drama pedagogy, which promotes social change and cultivates a deeper understanding of ourselves and others (O'Toole, 2022; O'Toole et al., 2009). O'Toole (2022) emphasises that through emotional engagement, drama allows students to connect their feelings to intellectual reflection, encouraging critical thinking, empathy, and social agency. His approach to process drama highlights the potential for students to explore and challenge societal structures, empowering them as agents of change within their communities and beyond (O'Toole, 1992). This perspective aligns with O'Toole's broader goal of using drama to develop emotional literacy and social transformation, positioning students as active participants in creating social change.

In line with this perspective, Kelly Freebody's *Drama Education as a Force for Change* (2022) reinforced the connection between drama pedagogy and social transformation. By drawing on various examples, Freebody illustrated how drama can challenge prevailing narratives and offer alternative perspectives. This socially-engaged approach to education empowers students, granting them a voice as agents of change within their communities and beyond. Through a range of discourses, she argues that drama pedagogy can potentially cultivate critical thinking, empathy, and social agency among students (Freebody, 2022).

Freebody refers to various research explaining how drama is understood pedagogically to develop the language students need to express and explore their understanding of the

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world. She argues that through the pedagogical practices outlined below, drama pedagogy can begin to build "...social understanding, social cohesion, and empathy" (2022).

These practices outline the multiple ways drama pedagogy contributes to prosocial learning and can be summarised as follows:

- Giving voice (Freebody & Goodwin, 2018) is the power of drama in providing us a platform to articulate our thoughts, perspectives and experiences. When giving voice to students, drama pedagogy empowers them to share their narratives and actively contribute to the learning process.
- Expression (O'Connor, 2015) is the role of drama in facilitating self-expression. Students are encouraged to convey their emotions and communicate their ideas and identities when engaging in dramatic activities, allowing them to better understand themselves and those around them.
- Creativity (Harris, 2014) is the capacity to generate original ideas and approaches. Drama pedagogy creates an environment that encourages innovation, originality, and nurtures imagination. Students improve their ability to solve problems, think critically, and engage in open-ended exploration through the creative process.
- Play (Ewing, 2012; O'Toole, 1992) promotes 'playing'. Participating in playful activities enables students to try out new ideas, take chances, and explore different viewpoints. It fosters a sense of spontaneity, curiosity, and joy, creating an environment conducive to learning and growth.

Through the practices outlined above, teachers can establish opportunities in the classroom to cultivate empathy, foster social cohesion, and promote social understanding. They enhance the transformative power of drama as a pedagogical approach, contributing to its effectiveness in facilitating learning for social change. While not explicitly focused on social change, acquiring new knowledge and skills through reflective processes in both fictional and real-world situations can prompt students to shift their perspectives on the world (Freebody, 2022).

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Students develop critical skills and dispositions essential for addressing social issues by engaging in drama pedagogy and immersing themselves in dramatic play, which involves experimentation, exploration, and the aesthetic shaping of experiences (Ewing, 2012).

Separately, Stevenson (2010) argues that cultural citizenship develops when students learn to navigate their roles within democratic societies while appreciating diverse perspectives. In this way, drama pedagogy has the potential to develop personal growth and cultivate responsible digital and physical citizens. Through drama students may learn to challenge dominant narratives, navigate complex social dynamics, and advocate for alternative perspectives. Becoming agents of change, they could explore social justice themes within the classroom to actively consider how to contribute to a more equitable and inclusive society. In this context, Kennelly (2006) highlights the unique role of community theatre in bringing citizenship education into the public sphere, offering students a platform to engage in critical dialogue and confront societal issues directly. This participatory approach helps students reflect, take meaningful action to address real-world challenges and advocate for social justice.

Expanding the discussion to focus on identity and power, Howard (2004) discusses the transformative power of interactive performance in fostering critical understanding and promoting social change, arguing that drama provides opportunities for participants to reflect on and reshape their identities, engage with cultural implications, and challenge social oppressions. Through these dramatic processes, students discover expressive language, creativity, playfulness, and the power of their voices, which are tools with which they can actively shape a more just and empathetic society. Canning (2020) further adds that theatre serves as a vital platform for exploring the contested nature of citizenship, enabling students to reflect on their roles within their communities and take meaningful action for social justice. By engaging in dramatic processes, students could contribute to reshaping public discourse and actively participate in societal transformation. As a result, drama pedagogy serves as a catalyst for transformative learning experiences that foster social awareness, empathy, and

the necessary skills for students to become active contributors to positive social change (Freebody, 2022; Neelands, 2009).

The following section explores how dramatic conventions allow participants to engage with social justice and facilitate transformative learning experiences. This exploration will provide insights into how these conventions allow students to address social issues and actively contribute to positive social change.

2.2.2 Conventions, Forms and Approaches

In drama learning, students are invited to step inside imagined worlds and co-create the moments of the Drama, taking on roles, co-constructing the action and making sense of symbolism, and embodying stories (Hatton, 2022).

Hatton (2022) highlights the immersive nature of drama learning, where students actively step inside imagined worlds, co-creating dramatic moments, assuming roles, constructing the action, and interpreting symbolism through embodiment. This engaging process in drama encompasses a variety of conventions, forms, and approaches that shape the educational experience and underpin many of the pedagogical strategies explored later in this chapter. To understand how drama pedagogy operates as a structured and intentional process, rather than just a creative outlet, it is useful to distinguish between these interrelated aspects of drama pedagogy. These distinctions also inform the pedagogical choices explored later in this research.

Conventions in drama refer to the accepted practice, technique, or element commonly used and understood within a specific theatrical context (O'Toole, 1992, p. 40). These conventions provide a shared language and framework for effective communication and conveying meaning within the dramatic context (Davis & Simou, 2014; Hatton, 2022; Heathcote & Bolton, 1995). Forms refer to the structure or organisation of a dramatic work, as well as specific genres or styles of drama that possess distinct structural elements, performance traditions, and aesthetic qualities (O'Toole, 1992, p. 3). Examples of forms include tragedy,

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comedy, melodrama, and process drama, each offering unique frameworks that influence the content, structure, and emotional impact of the theatrical experience (Hatton, 2022; Neelands & Goode, 2000). Finally, approaches in drama education, such as those embraced by practitioners like Dorothy Heathcote (1995), refer to a particular method or perspective adopted by practitioners, educators, or scholars to engage with the process of creating, studying, or teaching Drama (O'Neill, 2014, pp. 112-114). The approaches represent a set of principles, techniques, or philosophies that inform how drama is approached and practised (Hatton, 2022; Neelands, 2009).

Dorothy Heathcote, a researcher and teacher, advocated for drama's ability to empower students by developing critical thinking skills through active participation in drama-based learning. Heavily inspired by Lev Vygotsky, Bertolt Brecht, John Dewey, Maria Montessori, Paulo Freire, Jerzy Grotowski, and Augusto Boal, Heathcote's education principles focus on the value of active participation with drama as a space for exploring real-life issues (Davis, 2016; Heathcote & Bolton, 1995; O'Toole, 1992). While this research draws on participatory techniques associated with Boal, particularly Forum Theatre and Invisible Theatre, the overarching structure aligns most closely with Process Drama.

While this research draws most directly on Process Drama, it is vital to consider the broader pedagogical landscape that informs this study. Each approach offers different insights into how drama can support student agency, ethical inquiry, and collaborative learning. The following four approaches represent the core of Heathcote's dramatic inquiry model and are discussed here to situate the field historically; they are not applied in this research.

Heathcote's teaching methods follow four approaches to dramatic inquiry:

- Process Drama
- Rolling Role
- Mantle of the Expert
- The Commission Model.

These approaches all share the common goal of engaging students in active and experiential learning (Hatton, 2022; Heathcote & Bolton, 1995; Neelands & Goode, 2000).

Table 2.2

Comparison of Heathcote's Four Drama-Based Pedagogical Approaches: Process Drama, Rolling Role, Mantle of the Expert, and the Commission Mode

Approach	Description	Source
Process Drama	A structured sequence of activities to support students to explore a particular theme or subject. The teacher guides and facilitates a student's learning experience by acting as a mediator, drawing connections to the student's experiences in the drama with broader learning objectives and goals. The teacher will also provide feedback and support to help students reflect on and improve their work.	Edminston and Towler-Evans (2022)
Rolling Role	Students embody the roles of different characters in a narrative and explore those characters' perspectives and experiences. The teacher acts as a guide and will provide prompts or questions to help students consider their characters' perspectives and experiences.	Davis (2016)
Mantle of the Expert	Students take on the roles of experts in a particular field or profession and explore related problems or issues. The teacher sets up a fictional scenario related to the field or profession, encouraging students to use their imaginations to test their thinking against a variety of perspectives, experiences, and viewpoints in class to solve problems and create solutions within the context of the scenario.	Gain and Aitken (2022)

The Commission Model	In a student-led approach, students create a commissioned work based on a particular theme or subject. The teacher acts as a facilitator, providing a framework for the commission and guiding students as they develop their ideas, eventually allowing them to take ownership of the process and final product.	Heathcote and Bolton (1995) Allen and Handley (2022)
Note: While these approaches all use drama to support learning, they differ in terms of the role of the teacher, the level of student agency, and the focus on process versus product.		

All four approaches suggest that students learn best through imaginative contexts where they actively explore and understand complex ideas. With each approach, the students work as an ensemble to dramatise, discuss, and inquire into the meaning of events (Heathcote, 2000). In both Rolling Role and Mantle of the Expert, students make creative, conceptual connections and discoveries when workshopping strategies alongside their teacher through three phases of initiation, experiential learning, and reflection to promote student agency (Hatton, 2022; Hatton & Nicholls, 2018). Throughout this process, knowledge is actively created in collaboration with other students, critically thinking and reflecting on various experiences, perspectives, and viewpoints in a learning group "...as a means of teaching children that theories of the world are provisional, contestable, and always evolving" (Gain & Aitken, 2022).

This emphasis on co-constructed and evolving knowledge is reflected in classroom-based research by Gallagher and Jacobson (2018). In their two-year ethnographic study in Toronto secondary schools, they observed that students who engaged in oral history and verbatim performance developed stronger interpersonal understanding and ethical awareness. Working collaboratively to shape and perform one another's lived experiences, students demonstrated reflective inquiry and relational sensitivity, particularly when exploring identity-

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rich social narratives. While the study did not adopt Heathcote's named approaches, its findings closely align with the pedagogical aims of Process Drama and Mantle of the Expert, particularly in their emphasis on student agency, collaboration, and critical engagement with complex perspectives.

Through utilising conventions, forms, and approaches in Drama, students actively participate in collaborative spaces that allow them to engage with the complexity of human experiences and deeply reflect upon the diverse affairs of humankind (Heathcote, 1983, pp. 696, 701). In doing so, drama pedagogy prepares students to confront complex challenges, including what Gain and Aitken (2022) describe as wicked problems:¹² persistent, multifaceted issues that defy definitive solutions. Drama can foster active citizenship in addressing these challenges, offering individuals a platform to reflect on their roles within their communities and contribute to collective problem-solving (Balme, 2022). By engaging in dramatic conventions, students learn to navigate social dynamics and develop the skills necessary for active participation in civic life.

These wicked problems require continuous exploration, as they cannot be definitively solved but must be revisited and refined over time. Engaging with wicked problems calls for exploring multiple possibilities and perspectives, emphasising the need for creative, collaborative efforts within a group to grapple with these complexities (Gain & Aitken, 2022). This research sits within a broader shift in human interaction. Everyday communication, identity play, and decision-making are increasingly shaped by networked and algorithmic environments, meaning the ethical questions students meet in school are continuous with life beyond school. In this context, drama pedagogy also embraces a 'mutant pedagogy' approach, which opens up spaces of encounter for participants to think, act, and exist differently. Such encounters unsettle fixed ways of perceiving the world, fostering the emergence of diverse ideas and perspectives that challenge singular narratives (Jones &

¹² Wicked problems are persistent and multifaceted challenges without definitive solutions, that require learners to explore diverse perspectives and engage collaboratively to navigate their complexity (Gain & Aitken, 2022).

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Woglom, 2006, as cited in Irwin et al., 2009, p. 6). This capacity for unsettling fixed narratives has long been embedded in drama education's philosophical roots.

Heathcote (1969) also emphasised how dramatic activity can support individuals during crises and turning points in life, serving as a catalyst for personal reflection and contemplation (p. 74). These ideas resonate throughout Edminston's work titled *Humanizing Education with Dramatic Inquiry* (2022). In this context, Heathcote's theories are a dominant example, outlining how drama pedagogy is rooted in education's transformative potential and social justice promotion. By implementing strategies facilitating creative opportunities, dialogue, and reflection, drama pedagogy emerges as a potent instrument for empowering students for richer learning experiences.

The process drama approach embraces improvisation and foregrounds exploration, play, and the cultivation of creative and critical thinking skills within a collaborative and immersive fictional world.

Process drama quite naturally embodies two mighty steps in curriculum and classroom management, both of which are also a divergence from traditional Western theatre practice. First, all the students are effectively engaged all the time within the dramatic action, usually as characters within the fictional context, and never as just a passive audience, or listeners. Second, though the overall structure is usually created and controlled by the teacher, the genre demands that the participants are not only given a degree of freedom in how they interpret their roles and functions, but they are usually invited at certain points to help or even take a lead in planning the Drama itself. (O'Toole et al., 2009, p. 105)

This approach is deeply rooted in constructivist learning theory, leveraging and building on students' existing knowledge. However, it goes beyond simple enactment, aiming to problematise and encourage active participation in shaping dramatic action. Key conventions

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such as active participation and teacher-in-role¹³ play crucial roles in this approach by engaging all students within the dramatic action, typically as characters within the fictional context, and involving the teacher as an actor/character, fostering higher levels of engagement and participation. The flexibility of process drama allows participants to interpret their roles and take ownership of the dramatic action, often contributing to its direction. This collaborative approach aligns with constructivist learning theory and provides students with opportunities for deep, experiential learning (O'Toole et al., 2009, p. 106).

The effectiveness of this approach has also been explored through classroom-based research. O'Toole (2009) documented a year-long series of process drama workshops conducted in Australian classrooms, designed as part of curriculum-aligned research into ethical understanding and values education. Students, working in role, engaged in complex fictional contexts that mirrored real-world dilemmas, including justice, discrimination, and community accountability. Drawing on detailed classroom observations and student reflections, O'Toole (2009) found that the process drama structure fostered a greater capacity for ethical reasoning, collaborative problem-solving, and social perspective-taking. These outcomes were particularly evident when students co-created dramatic action and reflected on moral complexity through role and dramatic tension. The findings reinforce process drama's potential to support deeply engaged, prosocial learning grounded in real-world ethical inquiry.

By promoting improvisation and exploring a shared fictional world, a process drama approach creates a dynamic and interactive environment that empowers students to express themselves freely, contribute to developing the narrative, and think creatively in the moment (Ewing, 2012; Neelands & Goode, 2000; O'Toole, 1992). Process drama incorporates a

¹³ "The person taking responsibility as facilitator for the group manages the theatrical possibilities and learning opportunities provided by the dramatic context from within the context by adopting a suitable role in order to excite interest, control the action, invite involvement, provoke tension, challenge superficial thinking, create choices and ambiguity, develop the narrative and create possibilities for the group to interact in role. The organiser is not acting spontaneously but is trying to stimulate curiosity, enquiry and commitment to the role and issue being address through her involvement in the drama" (Neelands & Goode, 2015, p.54).

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range of approaches, including exploration, play, creative and critical thinking, agency and autonomy, and transformative learning (Hatton, 2022; Heathcote & Bolton, 1995). Through guided exploration, students engage with various aspects of the subject matter, exploring diverse perspectives, themes, and issues. This process nurtures creativity, which is essential for fostering problem-solving and innovation. According to Harris (2014), creating a space for experimentation and risk-taking is fundamental for nurturing creative thinking, a core competency for 21st-century learners. Within this learning environment, students develop their creative and critical thinking skills by analysing and evaluating the situations presented in the drama (Dunn & O'Toole, 2011). This offers students a comprehensive and engaging learning experience that nurtures exploration and independence within the dramatic context.

O'Toole (2022) describes process drama as a pedagogy of enlightenment, describing when, “well-crafted, it may help people anywhere to illuminate and illustrate their lives and behaviour...a pedagogy of enlightenment” (p. 76). As a powerful learning tool, process drama fosters empathy, social justice, and deep personal connections to the material (Dunn & O'Toole, 2011; Neelands, 2009). It moves students beyond surface-level learning, promoting personal growth and raising social awareness through meaningful engagement with the subject matter (O'Toole, 2022). It creates an engaging dynamic learning experience that encourages creativity and promotes critical thinking (Jefferson & Anderson, 2017).

Cecily O'Neill's (1995) approach to process drama emphasises using pre-existing texts or scenarios as a foundation for exploration. By engaging with these established narratives, participants begin to connect them to real-world issues, advancing their critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Dunn & O'Toole, 2011; Jefferson & Anderson, 2017; O'Neill, 1995), in ways that begin to align with the values of prosocial education.

2.2.3 Prosocial Education and Drama Pedagogy

Prosocial education offers a useful lens through which to understand the shifts in student behaviour and ethical engagement observed throughout this study. Defined as an interdisciplinary framework that promotes the development of social, emotional, moral, and

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civic capacities alongside academic growth (Brown et al., 2012; Eisenberg & Musse, 1989; Waters Straub, 2012), it offers a conceptual bridge between character, ethical reasoning, and civic action, one that complements the drama-based pedagogies explored in this study. Prosocial education moves beyond a predefined curriculum designed for standardised testing success, integrating social-emotional learning (SEL), character education, collaboration, and community and voluntary actions to foster ethical and engaged citizens (O'Connor, 2010; Waters Straub, 2012). Student academic success increasingly depends on the broader human values emphasised in prosocial education, which foster holistic student development and creates environments where students can thrive in interconnected communities (Brown et al., 2012; Schonert-Reichl & Utne O' Brien, 2012).

Creating positive, inclusive, safe learning environments and a sense of belonging is essential for supporting prosocial education and promoting student wellbeing and academic achievement (Schonert-Reichl & Utne O' Brien, 2012). Research-led drama interventions, such as the Mophead classroom exploration or process dramas around migration and racism, have demonstrated how embodied meaning-making within safe group structures can provoke moral reflection and support students to articulate complex perspectives about social justice, belonging, and identity (O'Connor & Freebody, 2022, pp. 20-22). These environments provide the foundation for cultivating relational trust and mutual respect, which is essential for encouraging meaningful student participation and collaboration (Jefferson & Anderson, 2017; Neelands, 2009). By adopting shared community values, schools can reinforce the broader principles of prosocial education¹⁴, which aim to foster holistic development, positive relationships, and community engagement (Brown et al., 2012, pp. xiii-xiv). These principles extend their impact beyond face-to-face classrooms and into digital spaces, equipping students with the tools to navigate the complexities of blended

¹⁴ The principles of prosocial education include holistic development, positive school climates, integration of prosocial programs, collaboration, evidence-based practices, character education, social and emotional learning, and civic engagement education (Brown et al., 2012, pp. xiii-xiv).

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environments with integrity and social awareness, addressing the evolving nature of citizenship (Geller, 2017; Mattson, 2024).

Neelands positions his pedagogy within social constructivism, drawing on Vygotsky, Freire, Bruner, Dewey, and Greene (Neelands, 2009). While his approach frequently centres ensemble as a structure for democratic learning, it extends broadly to participatory drama pedagogies aimed at responsibility and citizenship. In this chapter, I distinguish social constructivism as learning developed through social interaction and guidance, constructionism as learning through the creation of shared artefacts, and social constructionism as the social production of meanings and norms. Interpreted this way, Neelands' practices resonate with constructionist and social constructionist perspectives: collaborative making of embodied dramatic artefacts, situated meaning-making through negotiated roles, and tangible, shared expressions of understanding (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Neelands, 2009; Papert, 1987).

Drama pedagogy provides a practical framework for enacting these principles in the classroom. Through collaborative and reflective practices, drama enables students to explore diverse perspectives, rehearse social scenarios, and develop a deeper understanding of ethical and moral considerations (Jefferson & Anderson, 2017, 2021; Neelands & Goode, 2000). By engaging with fictional worlds through dramatic inquiry, students can practice empathy and critical thinking, both essential components of prosocial behaviour (Freebody, 2022; Freebody & Finneran, 2015). Jonathan Neelands, Professor of Creative Education and Academic Director for Cultural Partnerships at the University of Warwick, has dedicated much of his career to researching drama and theatre to promote inclusiveness, prosocial behaviour, and citizenship.

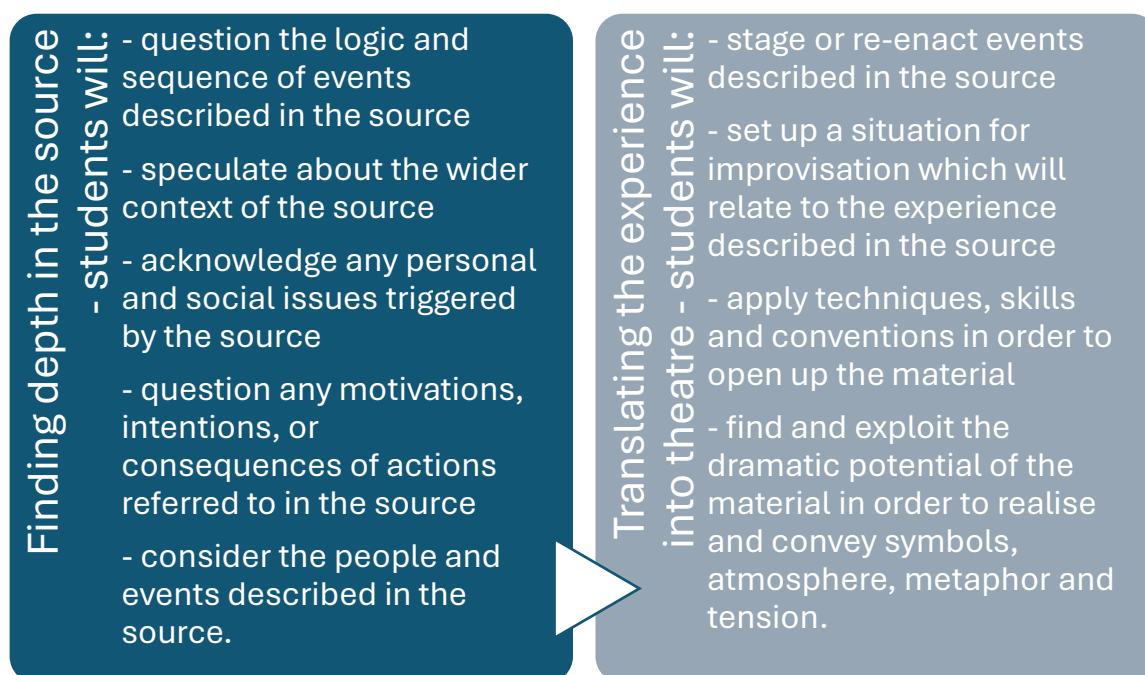
Neelands aligns his work with definitions of prosocial behaviour, which Eisenberg and Musse (1989) describe as voluntary actions intended to help or benefit other individuals or groups, with a concern for their feelings and welfare (O'Connor, 2010). Neeland's works demonstrate how drama serves as a reflective tool for students to examine their lives, societal roles, and

the consequences of their actions (O'Connor, 2010). His approach highlights how behaviours shape identities and futures and proposes a scaffold for inquiry-based learning, allowing students to explore the complexities of human existence within a drama classroom (Neelands & Goode, 2000). To illustrate this approach, three interrelated frameworks developed by Neelands and colleagues serve as overlapping dimensions of drama-based learning. These frameworks, each explored in the discussion that follows, include Figure 2.1, which traces the student's reflective inquiry; Figure 2.2, which foregrounds the teacher's pedagogical intentions; and Figure 2.3, which outlines the relational structure underpinning this shared learning, grounded in constructionist principles. Together, they offer a conceptual structure for understanding how drama fosters empathy, ethical reflection, and collaborative engagement.

Inside the drama classroom, relational trust and mutual respect are prerequisites for meaningful participation in the drama process; they align with the principles of prosocial education and are essential for creating classrooms that foster collaboration and shared community values (Brown et al., 2012; Neelands & Goode, 2000; Waters Straub, 2012). These principles are integral to Neelands (2000) cyclical drama inquiry process, where students first analyse and question a source's deeper social and personal contexts before translating these insights into theatrical exploration. Figure 2.1 below illustrates the cyclical nature of this practice, which involves *Finding Depth in the Source* and *Translating the Experience into Theatre* (Neelands, 2009). Developing trust and mutual respect through this process enables students to engage authentically with the material, apply creative techniques, and develop a deeper understanding of complex social issues through drama (Neelands & Goode, 2000; O'Connor, 2010).

Figure 2.1

The Cyclical Drama Inquiry Learning Process From a Student Perspective



Adapted from *Theatre as a learning process*, by J. Neelands & T. Goode, in P. O'Connor (Ed.), *Creating democratic citizenship through drama education: The writings of Jonathan Neelands* (pp. 25–34), Institute of Education Press, 2010.

Psychologists have explored similar processes to those found in the *Finding depth in the source* phase of drama pedagogy through social constructionist studies. Freedman and Combs (1996) conducted a series of three one-hour therapy sessions where participants engaged in group discussions about the values shaping their lives. Facilitators invited participants to acknowledge their values, identify discrepancies between their values and actions, consider the consequences of these discrepancies, and connect their reflections to broader real-world concerns (Freedman & Combs, 1996). Grounded in social constructionist theory, this process created an open and transparent space for reflection, allowing participants to examine their language, worldview, and interpersonal interactions (Freedman & Combs, 1996).

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This approach resonates with the goals of prosocial drama pedagogy, which also seeks to foster self-awareness, critical thinking, and empathy through structured inquiry and exploration (Neelands & Goode, 2000; O'Connor, 2010). By providing opportunities for participants to consider their perspectives within a social and collaborative context, social constructionism offers a valuable theoretical foundation for drama as a tool for prosocial education (Freedman & Combs, 1996; Neelands, 1994). The findings from Freedman and Combs' (1996) research reinforce embedding reflective practices to support the development of critical civic skills and ethical engagement, aligning with ISTE's standards and key conceptual categories of collaboration, reflection, and digital citizenship (ISTE, 2016; Neelands, 1994). These theoretical perspectives find practical expression in classroom approaches that foreground collaboration and community engagement as key mechanisms for prosocial development.

Collaboration and community engagement form the backbone of prosocial education. Activities like service-learning projects, collaborative inquiry, and group role-play foster empathy, civic awareness, and teamwork. These methods connect classroom learning to broader societal concerns, positioning education as a bridge to active citizenship (Brown et al., 2012; Waters Straub, 2012). Such approaches empower students to apply their knowledge and skills in real-world contexts, deepening their understanding of civic responsibility (Bentley, 2012).

In drama improvisation, students collaboratively build ideas and explore social concepts (O'Toole, 1992). Establishing meaningful connections to citizenship values, however, often requires the guidance of a skilled teacher (Neelands, 1997, 2009; O'Connor & Freebody, 2022; Ulubey & Gözütok, 2016). Neelands highlights the drama teacher's role in creating a safe and inclusive learning environment while addressing personal issues that may arise during inquiry. He emphasises the effectiveness of the 'teacher-in-role' convention (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995), in facilitating phase two of the cyclical process (see Figure 2.1).

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Neelands (2000) advocates employing teacher-in-role to embed values within the dramatic content. He outlines a convention's purpose in this context as a:

... sensitive way for the teacher/leader to initiate changes in the direction of the drama, challenges to thinking, shifts in action and new conventions from within the symbolic dimension, i.e., to manage the real needs and concerns of the group from within the drama. (Neelands & Goode, 2000, p. 29)

Hatton and Nicholls (2018) implemented this approach in *The Water Reckoning Project*, integrating teacher-in-role with digital technologies. In this ethnographic study, students engaged with societal and geographical challenges, using digital tools to explore environmental concerns and reflect on their potential impact. Through the use of the teacher-in-role convention, students maintained focus on ethical and environmental issues, enhancing their engagement and understanding (Hatton & Nicholls, 2018). Hatton and Nicholls (2018) observed that this method “raised the stakes of the enactment for student participants” (p. 393), fostering critical reflection and promoting sustainable thinking.

O'Neill (2014) further identifies teacher-in-role as an effective method for managing student engagement and navigating the complexities of dramatic inquiry. This convention deflects embarrassment, preventing students from feeling “stared at,” while directing their attention to the dramatic action (p. 38). The strategy positions students within meaningful relationships to the dramatic context and their assigned roles, encouraging a sense of responsibility and ethical engagement (O'Neill, 2014). Students become deeply involved in the process because, as O'Neill (2014) explains, “they have been placed in a significant relationship with the action - one that brings with it both an attitude and responsibilities” (p. 38).

While teacher-in-role remains a central convention, it is part of a broader repertoire that drama educators use to foster prosocial learning. Neelands and Goode (2000) propose that conventions such as still-image activities, hot-seating, and the form of Forum Theatre extend opportunities for perspective-taking and ethical inquiry. In this study, teacher-in-role and hot-

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seating were used alongside Boalian forms (such as Forum Theatre) as supporting classroom conventions to deepen perspective-taking and sustain ethical inquiry. These methods provide low-risk opportunities for students to symbolically navigate moral and social questions, fostering reflective engagement and active meaning-making.

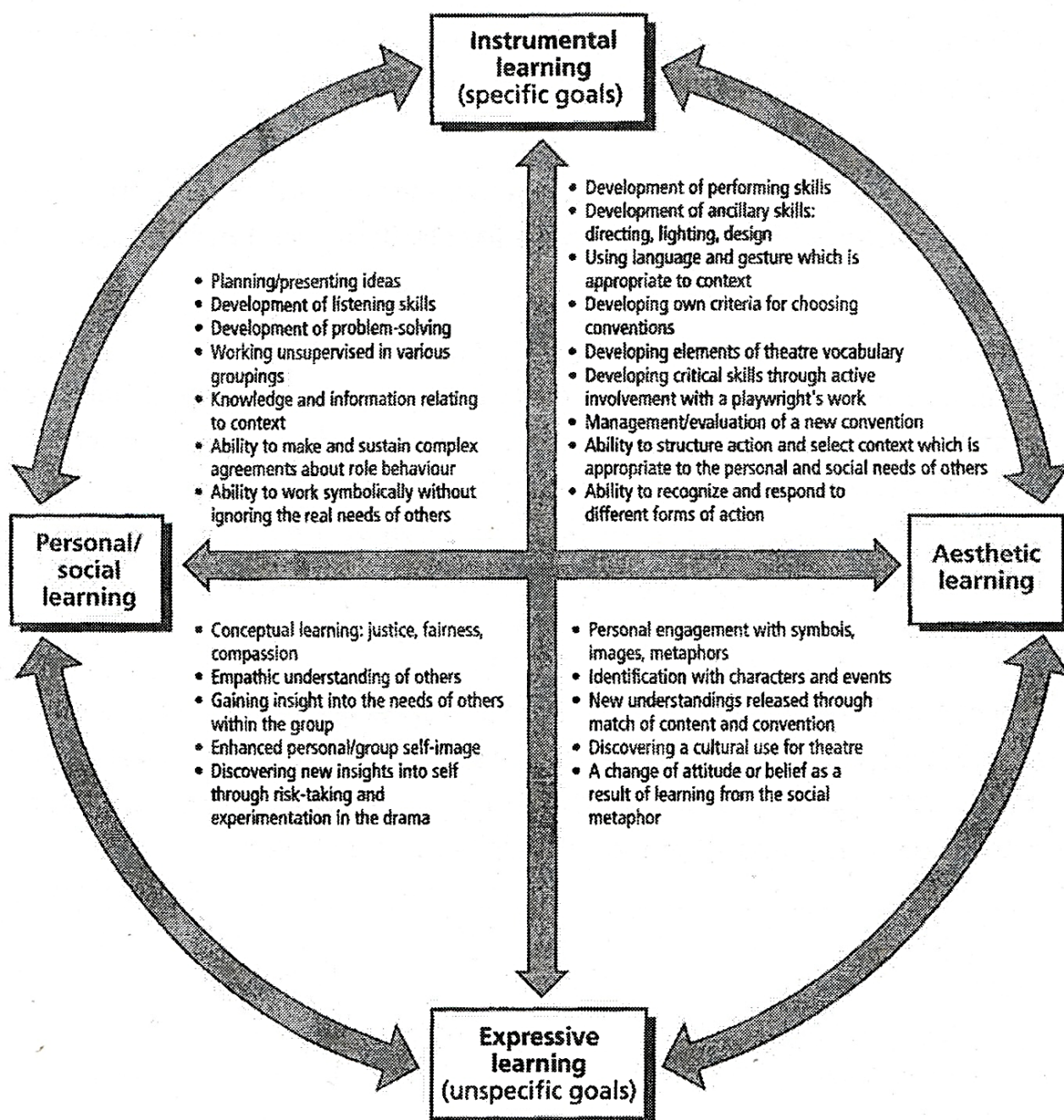
As students engage in these conventions or forms, the teacher's pedagogical choices become central. Neelands' Drama Compass framework provides insight into how these choices align with broader learning domains. The *intentions for work in drama compass* (Neelands & Goode, 2000, see Figure 2.2) aligns closely with the principles of prosocial education, which emphasise the integration of emotional, social, and civic learning alongside academic achievement (Brown et al., 2012). For instance, forms like Forum Theatre and conventions like hot-seating promote *instrumental learning* by developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills, while still-image activities encourage *aesthetic learning* through personal engagement with symbols and metaphors (Neelands & Goode, 2000).

Simultaneously, they foster *personal/social learning* by cultivating empathy, group dynamics, and insight into the needs of others, supporting *expressive learning* by enabling students to explore attitudes and beliefs through drama (Neelands & Goode, 2000).

The emphasis on interconnected learning pathways aligns with the holistic vision of prosocial education, where emotional and social competencies are integral to fostering responsible and ethical citizens (Schonert-Reichl & O'Brien, 2012). Just as prosocial education advocates for creating inclusive and supportive environments that promote trust and collaboration, the *intentions for work in drama compass* (Neelands & Goode, 2000, see Figure 2.2) similarly positions drama pedagogy as an instrument for building relational trust and engaging students in meaningful explorations of social and moral issues. This dual focus features how drama can be an artistic and educational tool for advancing prosocial goals, bridging the gap between classroom learning and broader societal concerns.

Figure 2.2

The Intentions for Work in Drama Compass



Reprinted from *Theatre as a learning process*, by J. Neelands & T. Goode, in P. O'Connor (Ed.), *Creating democratic citizenship through drama education: The writings of Jonathan Neelands* (p. 33), Institute of Education Press, 2010.

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Figure 2.2 visually represents how the constructionist elements of the drama process align with socially constructed learning to foster deep understanding and engagement with the concept of citizenship.

Through Drama we recreate and examine people's actions, including our own, and see both how they might have come about and where they might lead. We test our individual viewpoints against those of others; this is what happens as soon as two people take on different roles in a drama. They are placed in opposition or at the very least they represent different points of view. The conflicts at the heart of Drama carry the process forward. By testing and, where possible, resolving human predicaments, Drama helps pupils to face intellectual, physical, social and emotional challenges.

(Neelands, 1992, p. 36)

Neelands argues that the inherently reflective and collaborative nature of drama pedagogy, aligned with prosocial education themes, makes incorporating drama into the curriculum essential for fostering prosocial behaviours and citizenship (Neelands, 1991; O'Connor, 2010). In *The Meaning of Drama* (1991) and *Theatre Without Walls* (1994), Neelands differentiates drama as pedagogy from Drama as an art form, challenging curriculum writers who, he contends, often fail to recognise the transformative potential of drama in the classroom. He suggests that drama pedagogy enables students to make “artistic statements about their own lives,” positioning it as an essential practice for exploring identity, relationships, and citizenship (O'Connor, 2010, p. 64). Studies by Ulubey and Gözütok (2016) and Jefferson and Anderson (2017) also demonstrate how participatory practices like role-play and collaborative inquiry deepen students' understanding of themselves and others while fostering critical thinking.

Structured SEL programs (Bentley, 2012) and drama-based approaches (Bhukhanwala, 2014; Neelands & Goode, 2000), contribute to developing emotional intelligence, promoting student civic engagement, and equipping students with the skills needed to understand diverse perspectives and navigate complex social dynamics (Brown et al., 2012; Neelands,

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1991; Schonert-Reichl & Utne O' Brien, 2012). Drama inherently involves performative acts that mirror real-life interactions (Babbage, 2004; Boal, 1979; Howe, 2019). David Diamond's (2004; 2018) concept of *Theatre for Living* builds on the idea that 'theatre is everywhere,' extending it to emphasise how theatre reflects shared human stories and fosters empathy through participatory practices (Boal, 1979; Diamond, 2004; Neelands, 1991). Diamond (2004; 2018) highlights that theatre provides a medium for exploring relationships and addressing societal issues through symbolic and participatory practices, serving as a space for collective reflection and dialogue, and prompting understanding by breaking down barriers (Boal, 1979; Howard, 2004).

These 'acts' align with the principles of prosocial education, which focus on shared human experiences as a basis for developing empathy, relational trust, and community engagement through collaboration (Batson, 1998; O'Connor, 2010; Schonert-Reichl & Utne O' Brien, 2012). Collaborative inquiry and symbolic representation transform these human experiences into powerful tools for enabling ethical reflection (Diamond, 2004; Diamond et al., 2018). Halvorson (2004) explains that participatory practices in *Theatre for Living* foster empathy and solidarity by challenging fixed power dynamics through dialogic interactions, encouraging participants to navigate complex social realities collaboratively and dismantle oppressive structures. The success of this approach depends on the power of reflective and participatory practices, core components of drama pedagogy, for building relational trust, empathy, and collective problem-solving (O'Connor, 2010).

Having examined the student's reflective process and the teacher's pedagogical intentions, the final framework returns focus to the relational foundations of drama pedagogy for prosocial education. The *pedagogic contract for human learning* (Neelands, 2002; see Figure 2.3), draws these dimensions together, offering a philosophical anchor for the collaborative and ethical possibilities explored throughout this section.

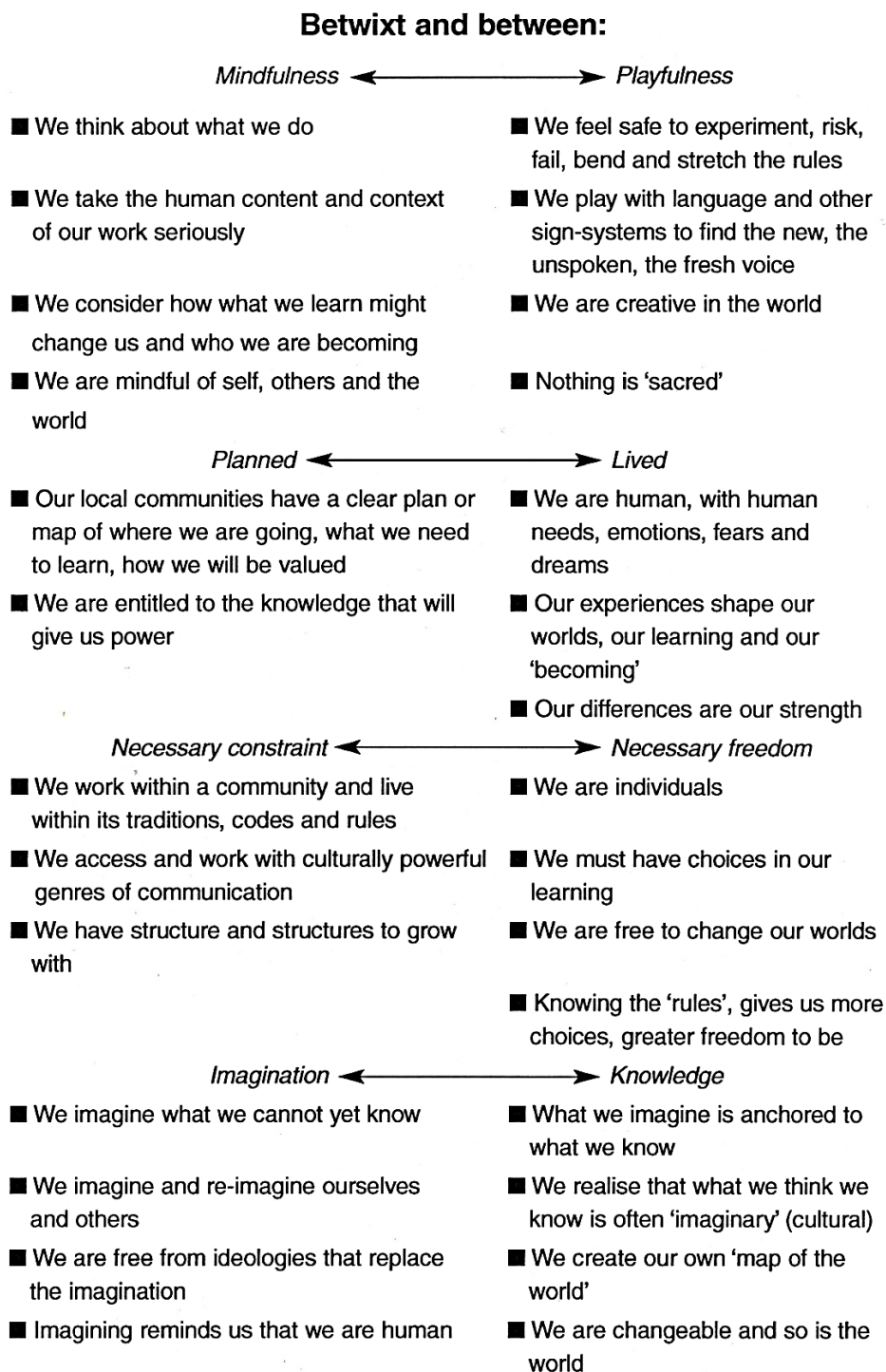
This framework provides a baseline to structure this approach with an alignment to constructionism and social constructionism's collaborative and reflective learning practices

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(Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Iancu, 2018; Papert, 1987). Rather than introducing a new layer, the Pedagogic Contract consolidates the principles already present in the Cyclical Inquiry Model and Drama Compass. It clarifies the implicit social agreement that underpins drama learning: centred on trust, co-agency, and the shared construction of meaning. In doing so, it bridges pedagogical action with the philosophical ethos of constructionist learning, aligning drama practice with the collaborative reflection required for prosocial development. Hair and Fine (2012) assert that learning is a social process shaped by interaction and shared meaning-making, which is central to this framework. The *pedagogic contract for human learning* (Neelands, 2002; see Figure 2.3), operationalises these principles through *Betwixt and Between* (2002) by encouraging collaborative exploration and promoting prosocial behaviours through drama pedagogy. Its focus on ensemble work and collaborative inquiry embodies these theories, enabling students to develop relational trust and critically engage with social issues (2002).

Figure 2.3

A Pedagogic Contract for Human Learning



Reprinted from "11/09 – The space in our hearts," by J. Neelands, in P. O'Connor (Ed.), *Creating democratic citizenship through drama education: The writings of Jonathan Neelands* (p. 129), Institute of Education Press, 2010.

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The tensions and possibilities mapped in Figure 2.3's framework, between constraint and freedom, knowledge and imagination, planning and lived experience, reinforce the emotional and relational dimensions of learning central to drama pedagogy. These dimensions are not peripheral; they are foundational to prosocial engagement (Neelands, 2009; O'Connor & Freebody, 2022). Within this context, emotional regulation and social awareness emerge as essential components of prosocial drama education, as they equip students with the ability to navigate interpersonal relationships and understand diverse perspectives. These competencies reflect a strong alignment between SEL and the goals of prosocial drama pedagogy, both of which centre on empathy, ethical decision-making, and relational understanding.

Taylor et al. (2017) emphasise that SEL programs enhance students' ability to empathise, regulate emotions, and build relational trust, aligning with drama pedagogy's collaborative and reflective practices (Neelands, 1992, 1997). Education programs grounded in this work include strength-based interventions, which align with Jefferson and Anderson's (2017) 4Cs framework and encourage positive developmental trajectories for students through improved academic, social, and emotional outcomes (Taylor et al., 2017). Aligned with Jefferson and Anderson's (2017) 4Cs, drama pedagogy cultivates creativity, critical reflection, communication, and collaboration and equips students to navigate complex interpersonal and societal dynamics. By integrating these elements into the drama classroom, students can meaningfully engage as active, empathetic citizens and develop essential skills for thriving in a twenty-first-century world (Jefferson & Anderson, 2017).

Building on the exploration of collaboration, relational trust, and cultural literacies through drama pedagogy, the concept of *metaxis* serves as a theoretical bridge between reflective practice and actionable change. Originating in Plato's *Symposium* (1932), "*metaxu*" refers to the "in-betweenness" of existence in two realms (Schutzman & Cohen-Cruz, 2006, p. 115). Augusto Boal redefined it as *metaxis* to capture the dual experiences inherent in drama (Boal, 1995). He used the term to describe the simultaneous existence in the fictional and

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real worlds (Boal, 1995, p. 43), supporting reflective engagement with societal issues through the dramatic tension between imagined and real contexts. This duality fosters a cohesive approach to ethical reflection and prosocial exploration, empowering students to examine real-life challenges while practising decision-making and social interaction (Neelands, 1994, p. 88). As such, *metaxis* offers a conceptual link between the values of prosocial drama pedagogy and the applied strategies of Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979), whose methods are examined next in relation to its application within education and digital citizenship. Before turning to those methods in detail, I will contextualise how drama pedagogy supports the kind of ethical, social, and emotional inquiry that underpins this adaptation.

This research is positioned within the field of drama as pedagogy, where dramatic conventions are used not for artistic performance, but the tool for ethical inquiry, critical reflection, and participatory learning. While Drama can be studied as a subject in its own right or as an expressive art form, this study focuses on how dramatic processes support social, emotional, and civic development, particularly within the context of digital citizenship education. When students take part in role-play, improvisation, or process drama, they are invited to step into another person's shoes, navigate dilemmas, and reflect on their own values and decisions (Freebody, 2022; Kitchen, 2021). Instead of being passive recipients of information, they become active participants in meaning-making. They experience moral tension, test possibilities, and rehearse responses in a safe, fictional frame. This process fosters empathy and social awareness, which are central to both ethical learning and participatory citizenship (Freebody, 2022; O'Connor & Freebody, 2021).

As students move between imagined scenarios and reflective dialogue, they engage in a process that mirrors ethical rehearsal, exploring values, testing possibilities, and rehearsing actions for more just futures through dramatic interaction (Freebody, 2022; Gursel-Bilgin, 2022). These experiences prepare students to reflect more deeply on their actions and responsibilities, both in physical communities and in online environments where issues of

safety, rights, and ethical conduct frequently arise (Choi, 2016, pp. 577-584; Freebody, 2022).

This kind of embodied inquiry aligns closely with social constructionist and constructionist learning theory. In drama, knowledge emerges through social processes. Students create meaning by engaging in collaborative storytelling, negotiating roles, and reflecting on imagined scenarios (Kitchen, 2021, pp. 382-384; Wells et al., 2023, pp. 814-816).

Understanding is shaped through interaction and doing, which makes drama a practical and relational form of inquiry. These qualities are particularly relevant in the context of digital citizenship, where ethical decision-making and respectful participation demand emotional awareness, perspective-taking, and reflective judgment (Mattson, 2016; O'Reilly et al., 2024, pp. 586–589). Drama pedagogy supports this by offering a space where students can safely rehearse digital dilemmas, including exclusion, misinformation, or peer pressure, through symbolic, role-based exploration.

While Augusto Boal was not an education theorist, his theatrical methods have been meaningfully adopted by educators seeking to foster student agency and ethical reflection (Babbage, 2004; Boal, 1979). His concepts, including the spect-actor, Joker, and *metaxis*, offer practical strategies for navigating social complexity and developing ethical awareness (Boal, 1979; Freebody & Finneran, 2013; Schutzman, 2019; Schutzman & Cohen-Cruz, 2006). Educators have since extended these strategies to support ethical learning in physical and digital contexts. The next section examines how Boal's theatrical methods, particularly his critique of traditional theatre and his call for participatory, reflective engagement, have been adapted in educational settings to support student agency, ethical inquiry, and digital citizenship within blended learning environments.

2.3 Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed

This section of the literature review examines Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* (Boal, 1979) to explore how it builds upon the collaborative and reflective foundations of prosocial drama

pedagogy established in the previous section. Techniques such as Forum Theatre and the concept of the spect-actor are discussed in relation to how they transform passive observers into active participants (1979). The discussion is structured in three parts: first, Boal's critique of traditional theatre as a tool of social control; second his proposition for a critical theatre built on audience participation and ethical inquiry; and third, an exploration of how Boal's approaches can inform educational practice in ways that support ethical reflection, identity, and participation in digitally blended spaces.

The literature explored in this section highlights how Boal's techniques have informed various educational and community practices, particularly how it provides a way for students to interrogate social exclusion, online conflict, and the complexities of participation across digital and physical spaces. This section investigates how these approaches may support reflection on social responsibility and ethical behaviour and considers their potential relevance to drama pedagogy and digital citizenship.

2.3.1 Theatre as Social Control

Boal (1979) argues that theatre is more tightly bound to society than other art forms, stating that "the theatre, in particular, is determined by society much more stringently than the other arts, because of its immediate contact with the public, and its greater power to convince" (p. 44). First published in 1979, Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* was a revolutionary piece of writing highlighting the political power of theatre from Aristotle to Brecht. Written to reveal the connections between our social construction and its enactment on stage, Boal promotes the idea that theatre allows us to "observe ourselves in action" (Lacy, 2006). Across the early chapters of his book, he describes how theatre has historically operated as a tool of coercion and control.

This argument is used as evidence to frame his main theatrical argument: that theatre is a weapon to promote social change, "a weapon for liberation" (Babbage, 2004, p. 38).

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However, some argue that it focuses more on empowering individuals rather than on strategies to achieve “radical and political social transformation” (Davis & O'Sullivan, 2000).

One of Boal's central critiques addresses the structure of Aristotelian tragedy, which he saw as a moral device reinforcing dominant social values (Boal, 1979). Through the hero's reversal, recognition, and downfall, tragedy offered a resolution that encouraged audiences to accept rather than interrogate prevailing ideologies. Boal described this narrative arc as a dramatic convention and a form of ideological training that dulled critical reflection (p. 36). He extended this analysis of tragedy beyond Ancient Greece, tracing similar patterns in religious and authoritarian uses of theatre that suppress dissent and uphold dominant ideologies (Boal, 1979, 1995; Schutzman & Cohen-Cruz, 2006). These historical patterns position theatre not merely as a mirror to society but as a mechanism through which social expectations are constructed and maintained. In this way, Boal repositions drama as a means through which individuals can interrogate the forces shaping their behaviour, rehearse alternative ways of being, and challenge the conditions of conformity. In the context of this research, this framing positions drama as a reflective tool and a practice that cultivates ethical awareness and supports purposeful action. It becomes a method that could enable students to reimagine their roles and responsibilities across both physical and digital contexts.

This repositioning of theatre's role becomes clearer when compared to Boal's critique of how traditional theatre has often constrained agency rather than nurtured it. He argues that dominant institutions, including the clergy and nobility, have historically shaped theatre into a mechanism for social control, reinforcing conformity through depersonalised, authoritarian forms (Boal, 1979). These systems that “immobilise society” present what Boal describes as a “static stereotyped world” where homogeneous, transcendental values suppress individual voices and personal expression (Boal, 1979, p. 55). This framing deepens the ethical imperative behind Boal's work: if theatre can be used to maintain oppressive structures, it can also become the space where they are critically questioned.

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Boal (1979) noted that Ancient Greek theatre was used to guide citizens toward political ideals, embedding messages of justice and morality through choruses and narrative. This early example reinforced the long-standing relationship between drama, civic engagement, and the shaping of collective values, a theme that continues to inform the pedagogical purpose of this research. Boal (1979) reflects on the moral intent behind classical tragedy, stating that "Tragedy imitates human acts, those of his rational soul, directed to the attainment of his supreme end, happiness" (p. 12). This framing encapsulates the instructive and morally prescriptive function of traditional theatre. Babbage (2004) extends this consideration by explaining how *Theatre of the Oppressed* (Boal, 1979) challenges those traditions, disrupting hierarchies and repositioning the audience as active participants. In many historical settings, theatre reinforced "hierarchical and controlling" societal norms, positioning the audience as passive recipients of dominant ideologies. Instead of questioning the status quo, it often reinforced compliance and shaped societal expectations.

In response, Boal developed a participatory model of theatre as collective engagement that invites actors and audiences to interrogate prevailing narratives and rehearse alternative endings. This shift from passive spectatorship to active participation is not merely aesthetic; it represents a deeper pedagogical commitment to fostering critical consciousness and enabling social action (Babbage, 2004, pp. 62-63). Boal's approach reflects the influence of Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 2018), particularly the emphasis on dialogue, participation, and the breaking of silence in educational spaces. Freire's work sought to transform democratic voice, participation and humanity in students, particularly through education as a collaborative, emancipatory process (Freire, 2018; Herrick, 2019). This shared ethos of critical reflection and collective agency has informed a range of applied contexts, including community-based workshops and classroom practices.

Kina and Fernandes (2017) used *Theatre of the Oppressed* (Boal, 1979) in a series of community workshops designed to help participants unpack and respond to everyday experiences of oppression. Participants revisited incidents from their own lives and used

Forum Theatre techniques to re-enact and rework those moments, collaboratively generating strategies for social action. Their study showed how Boal's methods, grounded in Freirean pedagogy, foster a participatory approach to justice, where reflection and rehearsal become tools for transformation (Babbage, 2004; Freire, 2018; Kina & Fernandes, 2017). This emphasis on embodied, collective inquiry aligns with this research, where students use drama to examine ethical dilemmas and explore their roles in digitally blended communities (Bhukhanwala, 2014; Diamond, 2004; Howard, 2004). Boal also recognised that theatre has, across time, functioned to reinforce dominant power structures and shape social behaviours (Boal, 1979, 1995; Schutzman & Cohen-Cruz, 2006). This dual function, its potential to liberate and constrain, sits at the centre of Boal's theoretical concerns (Boal, 1979; Pottlitzer, 2010).

Emerging from this tension, Boal proposed a new theatrical form in which spectators could become agents of change rather than passive consumers of dominant ideology.

2.3.2 Boal's Proposition for Critical Theatre and Spect-Actors

Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979) is firmly grounded in the belief that students must be active participants in their own transformation, a principle articulated through his concept of the spect-actor. His techniques, such as Forum Theatre and Image Theatre, invite students to critically examine power dynamics and ethical dilemmas (Boal, 1979; Howard, 2004; Schaedler, 2010), equipping them with tools to navigate the complexities of digital and social spaces. Boal (1979, p. 24) states that meaningful change occurs through reflective and creative processes, which, within this research, may enable students to rehearse their roles as responsible digital citizens. Gursel-Bilgin (2022) and Zembylas (2022) further assert that such approaches enhance students' understanding of collective responsibilities while fostering critical awareness of their behaviours in digital contexts.

While Forum Theatre is described as shifting participants from observer to spect-actor, the experience of participation is not always straightforward. As Nicholson (2005) and Busby

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(2021) note, spectators who do not intervene can still experience transformation through reflection, observation, and discussion. The boundary between active and passive is therefore more complex than the model suggests. Busby (2021) also cautions that requiring all participants to act can risk undermining the very idea of empowerment that Forum Theatre promotes. In reality, participation is influenced by a range of factors, including confidence, group dynamics, and classroom conditions. Applied theatre practitioners, including teachers, must be alert to these challenges and remember that inclusion, choice, and consent are essential. As Nicholson (2005) suggests, classrooms have their own power structures and practical limits. Negotiating open-ended, constructivist drama work alongside curriculum, assessment, and resource constraints is demanding and can affect outcomes. Recognising these tensions allows drama pedagogies to remain ambitious while also being grounded in real-world educational settings.

Boal's concept of the spect-actor builds on this foundation of active transformation. He proposes that meaningful social change becomes possible when spectators step beyond observation to actively intervene in the dramatic action. Instead of being passive recipients of a fixed narrative, they are invited to enter the drama, challenge its trajectory, and examine the implications of intervention. As Boal (1979) explains, "By taking possession of the stage, the Spect-Actor is consciously performing a responsible act. The stage is a representation of the reality, a fiction. But the Spect-Actor is not fictional...By transforming fiction, he is transformed into himself" (p. xxi).

This dual existence in the world of the theatre and the world beyond it encourages students to see themselves as agents of ethical decision-making. Schaedler's (2010) research with Brazilian immigrants participating in a four-month community-based English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program in New England offers an example of this process. Using Forum Theatre techniques across seven sessions, participants revisited personal stories of oppression, re-enacting and altering them through spect-actor engagement. This process supported English language development and improved self-esteem, critical literacy, and a

renewed sense of agency. As spect-actors, participants moved from the margins of linguistic and cultural life toward active authorship of their experiences, rehearsing strategies for real-world interactions and negotiating new forms of social participation. Considering Schaedler's (2010) insights, this research explores how the spect-actor method may offer students a meaningful opportunity to practise ethical reflection, build confidence, and examine their social roles across human-centred, digitally blended spaces. The role of spect-actors in theatre parallels how students might engage with digital platforms, shifting from passive content consumers to active participants in shaping their roles within and through digital environments.

To allow the development from spectator to spect-actor, Boal positioned the Joker as a facilitator of disruption and inquiry. The Joker plays a pivotal, shifting role, serving as both provocateur and mediator to ensure active participation and democratic engagement (Prentki, 2015; Schutzman, 2006). Described as a figure capable of shaping "magical reality" (Boal, 1979, p. 159) and as a "boundary-dweller...or trickster" (Schutzman, 2006, p. 140), the Joker creatively facilitates dialogue between spect-actors and the performance. The 'magic' of the Joker lies in their ability to navigate the boundaries of fiction and reality, challenging the audience to critically engage with the ethical and social dimensions of the narrative (Boal, 1979) through reflection, creativity, experimentation, and sustained inquiry (Schutzman, 2019, p. 110). While not explicitly a direct reflection of Ancient Greek practices, the Joker's role resembles Boal's perspective of the historical uses of theatre, such as encouraging collective moral and civic engagement through storytelling, choruses, and symbolic performances (Boal, 1979; Schutzman, 2006). This function is explored further in the methodology chapter, where the Joker's role is contextualised within digitally blended drama practices aligned to this research.

This exploration of the actor's transformation is deepened and further aligned with this research when Boal introduces the concept of taking on roles, explaining how actors use masks and costumes to separate themselves from the characters they portray, temporarily

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becoming 'the Other' (Boal, 1979, p. xiv). He explains how this division led to the actor's transformation: "Once in costume, the character was no longer Thespis: it was the Other. Actor and character, previously one and the same, were now separated and made into two: man and Mask" (p. xv). This separation allowed actors to embody multiple identities simultaneously, a theme that Boal describes as "one of the most captivating themes of theatre – and of psychology" and parallels how individuals adopt dual identities in contemporary contexts, particularly on social media.

The introduction of a mask in the theatre allowed the actor to 'think as two people' and embody multiple identities at once, reflecting the duality of existing both within the character, and as themselves (Boal, 1979). This theatrical metaphor provides a useful lens for understanding how students explore and reflect on digital identities through drama pedagogy in this study. Much like the actor shifting between self and character, social media users navigate dual identities by constructing distinct personas across multiple accounts. A study by Darr and Doss (2022) found that all participants, aged 13 to 17, maintained both a 'Finsta'¹⁵ and a 'Rinsta'¹⁶, highlighting how common it is for teenagers to juggle multiple online identities. 'Finstas' allow them to express their true, unfiltered selves within a trusted circle, while 'Rinstas' represent a more polished, idealised version for a broader audience.

Examining these dual roles encourages students to reflect on the distinct behaviours required in both digital and offline environments, prompting consideration of the ethical implications of their actions across these spaces (Bhukhanwala, 2014; O'Connor & Freebody, 2022). This practice mirrors the concept of wearing different masks in both the online and offline worlds, a metaphor established in Boalian theatre and digital identity research (Boal, 1979; Boyd, 2014). The concept of multiple online identities provides a useful framework for examining how students navigate digital citizenship, particularly in environments where audience expectations and social context shape self-presentation (Darr

¹⁵ A fake Instagram account.

¹⁶ A real Instagram account.

& Doss, 2022; Livingstone & Sefton-Green, 2016). Like actors in theatre who switch between characters or masks, students present different versions of themselves online, adjusting their behaviour according to social expectations, peer dynamics and platform norms (Boyd, 2014). Drama pedagogy offers a platform for students to explore these roles, helping them reflect on how their online 'masks' compare to those they wear in the human-centred world. Through this process, they consider the moral tensions and responsibilities that emerge through their blended identities.

The concept of role and identity, central to both theatrical performance and digital participation, opens up questions of how individuals present themselves and how they respond to the roles of others. For decades, such questions have been explored through theatre for social change, particularly in how performers and audiences navigate responsibility (Boal, 1979). Heavily influenced by Brecht, Boal recognised how epic theatre encouraged audiences to maintain a critical distance through the '*Verfremdungseffekt*' (the alienation effect), disrupting emotional immersion to prompt reflection (Boal, 1979; Brecht, 1964). Yet, Boal asked more of his audience, inviting them not just to observe but to intervene. As Brecht noted, epic theatre "Turns the spectator into an observer but arouses his capacity for action, forces him to take decisions.... stands outside, studies the human being as the object of enquiry, he is alterable and able to alter" (Velmani, 2013). Boal extended this logic: in the shift from observation to action, his spect-actor emerged as a figure of ethical engagement, rehearsing change within and beyond the scene. This conceptual progression from catharsis to critique and co-authorship resonates with this research's focus on how students use drama to explore ethical decisions, navigate blended identities, and reflect on their roles as digital citizens.

Boal's concept of the spect-actor embraces this participatory approach, inviting individuals to assume the protagonist's role, actively shape the dramatic action, and explore possibilities for change, rather than surrender power to performers or predetermined narratives. As Boal explained, the spect-actor is capable of "chang[ing] the dramatic action, try[ing] out

solutions, discuss[ing] plans for change – in short, train[ing] themselves for real action" (1979, p. 122). In this model, participation becomes a form of ethical inquiry, where individuals engage critically with the narrative to influence the story and its outcome. Lee (2015), however, critiques that not all participants can engage equally due to barriers such as language and cultural differences, which may limit full participation. This highlights the challenge of creating genuine democratic spaces in theatrical and educational settings, where students or teachers must navigate complex issues of equity and power dynamics. Despite these challenges, Boal's concept of the spect-actor remains central to the theoretical framework of this study, as it centres student voice and action within ethical learning. Recognising these critiques deepens our understanding of how social interactions shape individual roles and perspectives in the theatre. Even participants facing barriers such as language or cultural differences can meaningfully contribute and influence social dynamics, supporting the need for inclusive practices in both drama pedagogy and digital citizenship. This movement from passive spectatorship to collaborative, embodied reflection is evident in Gursel-Bilgin's (2022) study, which explored the use of *Theatre of the Oppressed* (Boal, 1979) as a vehicle for critical peace education in a Turkish university classroom. Working within a system that traditionally prioritised memorisation and silence, she introduced Image Theatre as a way for students to examine issues of inequality. Over several sessions, students created physical tableaux to express personal and observed injustices. One group depicted a pair of students being mocked for their appearance, an image that catalysed a difficult and revealing class conversation. When a female classmate challenged a male student's interpretation, the scene was re-sculpted to include a gesture of solidarity and care. This was not a performance with a fixed conclusion but a dialogic and relational encounter. Through embodied and collaborative exploration, students moved from static representation to shared reflection, similar to the pedagogical processes used in this study, where students negotiate ethical dilemmas and social identities through physical and dramatic forms.

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Gursel-Bilgin's (2022) study demonstrates how participants developed a new image and a new way of seeing and engaging with others: an ethical rehearsal grounded in empathy and agency. Her research affirms Boal's vision of theatre as a space where roles are not assigned but questioned, not fixed but fluid. Through the collective analysis of physical images, students critically reflected on social inequality and collaboratively imagined more equitable alternative solutions. From this perspective, the spect-actor (Boal, 1979) becomes more than a participant; they become a co-author of meaning. Such an approach reinforces the pedagogical commitments of this research, offering a model for students to explore agency, ethics, and identity in digitally blended environments.

Boal's (1979) reconceptualisation of the actor's role in theatre, shifting from character-based performance to participatory involvement, offers a critical lens through which agency, identity, and ethical reflection become active processes. As students navigate layered roles across human-centred and digital spaces, the spect-actor serves as a framework for exploring how their choices shape, and are shaped, by broader social dynamics. Boal's theories of the mask, Joker and spect-actor (1979) offer a metaphor for dual identity and a process for interrogating digital behaviours, challenging norms, and rehearsing more responsible ways of engaging with others.

These ideas align with the social constructionist and constructionist perspectives (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Papert, 1987) underpinning this research, where knowledge is formed through interaction, and learners actively co-create meaning. Through drama pedagogy, students could be recipients of content and co-constructors of ethical insight, social understanding, and self-awareness. Just as Boal (1979) imagined theatre as a space for transformation, digital environments also carry this potential, depending on how learners are positioned to question, reflect, and participate.

2.3.3 Theatre of the Oppressed for Digital Citizenship Education

Research into drama pedagogy grounded in participation and reflection, such as those explored in Schaedler's (2010) study, demonstrates how Boalian approaches foster critical engagement, agency, and ethical awareness. Such practices support students in interrogating lived experiences, rehearsing alternative responses, and developing strategies for ethical decision-making. The relevance of these outcomes continues to grow as young people negotiate the challenges of digitally blended social environments.

This research considers these insights by investigating how drama pedagogy may help students reflect on their digital interactions and foster socially responsible participation. While the concept of the spect-actor offers a useful lens for understanding how students engage with digital platforms, it is not the only relevant dimension. Boal's wider framework invites participants to rehearse ethical decisions, test possibilities, and reflect on their social positioning through embodied and collective inquiry (Boal, 1979). These practices are utilised in this research as students explore identity and responsibility through dramatic form, enabling engagement with content and supporting the rehearsal of agency and ethical decision-making (Howard, 2004; O'Connor & Freebody, 2022) across both online and offline contexts.

These dimensions of participation and ethical inquiry also surface in educational research of Boal's methods. Bhukhanwala's (2014) research offers a valuable example of how *Theatre of the Oppressed* (Boal, 1979) can promote ethical insight and social reflection in educational settings. Conducted in an after-school program with 14 middle school¹⁷ students, the study used Boal's Image Theatre across a series of eight weekly sessions, structured to build trust, encourage dialogue, and support students in co-creating and analysing bullying scenarios. The study drew on field notes, recordings, written reflections, and observations to identify thematic shifts in how students expressed increased empathy

¹⁷ In the context of Bhukhanwala's (2014) study, "middle school" refers to students in grades 6–8 (approximately ages 11–14) in the United States of America education system.

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for peers' experiences, identified and questioned unequal power relations, and reported greater confidence when responding to interpersonal conflict (Bhukhanwala, 2014). Students were positioned as co-constructors of meaning and encouraged to explore their experiences through embodied representation and collective inquiry. Instead of obeying a fixed set of behavioural rules, they rehearsed context-sensitive strategies for navigating social tensions within their school and social lives.

Bhukhanwala's (2014) methodology is particularly relevant to this research because of its emphasis on embodiment and reflection. It demonstrates how drama pedagogy can provide young people with opportunities to explore the moral dimensions of digital behaviour and practise contextually responsive strategies, an approach with clear parallels to the challenges of digital citizenship. Students might similarly explore online dilemmas, reflect on their digital behaviours, and rehearse more responsible ways of engaging in blended environments.

Returning to Boal's theoretical foundation helps to clarify how these practices disrupt passive forms of engagement. Boal argued that the primary purpose of the Aristotelian tragedy was to make the spectator conform to society and the political ideas within the play (Boal, 1979). In contrast, Boal's concept of the spect-actor positions students as active participants who question and reshape those norms. This idea becomes pivotal within the context of this research, as drama pedagogy enables students to embody diverse perspectives and reflect on their roles as digital citizens, engaging ethically and socially within the blended world.

Through 'playing' with different scenarios, students may critically reflect on their online and offline behaviours and societal norms, confronting the contradictions present in social realities, which is a key element in fostering collective transformation (Howe, 2019). Boal's belief that theatre can reinforce and challenge societal norms offers a framework for students to critically assess their digital interactions and responsibilities through drama pedagogy. One essential aspect of improving ethical understanding is addressing what Zembylas (2022) refers to as 'aesthetic injustice', the exclusion or marginalisation of certain

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voices, which, when tackled through *Theatre of the Oppressed* (Boal, 1979), nurtures critical reflection and a deeper understanding of social and ethical responsibility (Howard, 2004; Zembylas, 2022).

Together, these examples illustrate the potential of Boal's participatory methods to empower students as ethical, critically aware participants in their social and digital lives.

2.4 Conclusion

The chapter has demonstrated how drama pedagogy, through frameworks such as Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979) and Neelands' pedagogic approaches, provides a transformative space for fostering self-awareness, empathy, and prosocial behaviour (Boal, 1979; Neelands, 2009). Boal's focus on social change, emphasising active participation in societal transformation, complements Neelands' work through pedagogic contracts, which encourage collaborative learning and ethical decision-making (Boal, 1979; Neelands, 2002). Together, these frameworks highlight drama's reflective and participatory impact as both a teaching tool and a medium for social change, enabling students to engage with ethical dilemmas and social responsibilities in both human-centred and digital environments (Bhukhanwala, 2014; O'Connor & Freebody, 2022).

This review also outlines how these frameworks translate into practical classroom applications. Teachers may use Boal's Forum Theatre techniques (1979) to support students in rehearsing ethical decision-making in simulated online scenarios, where the stakes of digital conflict, trolling, or exclusion can be safely explored and reimaged. Such processes create space for empathy, agency, and emotional literacy (Bhukhanwala, 2014; Gursel-Bilgin, 2022). Complementing this, Neelands' pedagogic approach forms part of a broader tradition of drama pedagogy that invites students into collaborative inquiry around ethical and social dilemmas, supporting prosocial development and active citizenship (Neelands, 1992, 2009; O'Connor, 2010). In classroom practice, this might involve collaborative projects that encourage students to reflect critically on their digital interactions and civic

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responsibilities (Neelands, 2009; O'Connor & Freebody, 2022). These approaches position Drama as a process in which students rehearse ethical decision-making, reflect on digital and social responsibility and build the critical awareness required for participation in the digitally blended world.

Applying these theoretical contributions demonstrates the need for continued exploration of how drama pedagogy can shape responsible digital citizens (O'Connor, 2010; O'Connor & Freebody, 2022). As this review has outlined, participatory and reflective approaches can foster ethical decision-making, empathy, and critical awareness in response to the complexities of the blended world. However, further research is needed to examine the sustained influence of such pedagogical strategies on students' digital behaviours, relationships, and civic understanding (Freebody, 2022; Mattson, 2016; Pangrazio & Sefton-Green, 2021). Such research will be essential in guiding future practice by supporting educators to implement drama-based approaches that move beyond compliance and toward relational and ethical engagement in digital environments (Freebody & Finneran, 2021a). This study contributes to that effort by examining how drama pedagogy supported students and teachers in navigating identity, responsibility, and citizenship in digitally blended learning environments.

3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This research investigates how students engage with their identities within the blended world, where digital and physical realities intersect. I investigate how students reflect on their experiences in ways that support wellbeing, ethical awareness, and critical understanding of their roles as blended citizens. This study aligns with the understanding that the arts not only address social issues but also possess the power to influence public opinion and shape decision-making (Siegesmund, 2023, pp. 34-35). These foundational principles form the basis of the design of this research, grounded in the theories of social constructionism and constructionism, emphasising that human reality is a product of social interactions and that we best understand it through collaborative and practical experiences (Elder-Vass, 2012; Healy, 2014).

3.2 Qualitative Research and Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research approach to generate deep, context-rich insights from participants, consistent with the understanding that “...*reality is socially constructed and it is what participants perceive it to be*” (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Qualitative research was well suited to the study, as it allowed me to interpret how participants made meaning of their experiences in familiar environments such as classrooms. Within these naturalistic settings, I gathered open-ended and contextualised responses, capturing how students and teachers expressed their understandings and interactions. As Saldaña (2023) affirms, qualitative inquiry recognises arts-based research as an epistemic approach to the empirical study of social life, particularly within the realm of theatre. He references the work of Elliot Eisner (1993), who championed the arts as 'ways of knowing' and modalities for representing and presenting the researcher's insights into and about the human condition. This perspective becomes especially relevant in the context of theatre and drama education, where the arts

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serve as creative forms of expression and powerful tools for understanding the human experience.

The researcher (myself) was the primary instrument for this study, as I collected, analysed, and examined data and documents, observed behaviours, conducted interviews, and facilitated the focus groups. The utilisation of multiple methods through four case studies allowed me as the researcher to apply complex reasoning through inductive and deductive logic, building patterns and themes from the bottom up (Creswell, 2007).

Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2018, p. 3) suggest that “qualitative data are a source of well-grounded, rich descriptions of social processes,” offering insight into how social phenomena such as language, culture, and power influence human beliefs, behaviours, and activities. It aligns with the notion of the social construction of knowledge, emphasising that what people believe becomes their reality and is open to inquiry. This research methodology focuses on collecting qualitative data that captures natural occurrences in ordinary settings, allowing the researcher to generate meaning in real-life situations. It also allows me to explore the intricacies of how and why events unfold as they do and assess causation within specific contexts. As Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2018) note, one essential characteristic of well-collected qualitative data is its emphasis on naturally occurring, everyday events in their natural settings, facilitating a comprehensive grasp of ‘real life’ situations. This approach goes beyond explaining how and why events occur and extends to evaluating causation within particular settings.

During the first four years of this research, I primarily worked as the NSW Creative Arts Curriculum Advisor and a Drama teacher, which positioned me to observe and study the use of Boal’s *Theatre of the Oppressed* framework, integrated with the u.b.do program (NSW Department of Education, 2019b), provided in **Appendix 6**¹⁸, as an innovative method for teaching digital citizenship. The u.b.do resource was developed by a collective of drama

¹⁸**Appendix 6** includes the full u.b.do teaching and learning program (NSW Department of Education, 2019b)

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teachers for the NSW Department of Education, which holds official authorship and copyright. While I identified the opportunity for drama to address a gap in digital citizenship education and supported the resource's development, I was not involved in its composition. My research role was to examine how teachers and students enacted the resource in classroom practice, not to author or deliver the program. The u.b.do resource was published online for voluntary use by any NSW public school, and its implementation only became a focus within the context of this research.

As Curriculum Advisor, I maintained professional proximity to the program's development, and to ensure transparency and research integrity, I was explicit with participating teachers about my departmental role and the nature of my involvement. My research focused solely on classroom implementation and student engagement with its Boalian methodologies. Throughout the study, I followed departmental and university ethics protocols, maintaining full transparency with all participants.

The u.b.do program (NSW Department of Education, 2019b), was specifically designed for Stage 4 and 5¹⁹, aligned with the NSW Drama 7-10 (2003) syllabus outcomes (BOS, 2003). The research design employed a qualitative methodology involving case studies, teacher interviews, class observations, and student focus groups across a five-week program across four public high schools in Sydney. This is outlined in further detail later in the chapter.

3.3 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical basis of the research draws on a combination of social constructionist and constructionist theory. Human reality is socially constructed and shaped by language, culture, and interactions bound by time and place. Learning is most effective through collaboration and practical engagement with these experiences (Elder-Vass, 2012; Healy, 2014). Social constructionism scaffolds participants' understanding of who they are as digital

¹⁹ Stage 4 and 5 of NSW schooling years is years 7-10, with students aged approximately 12-16 years old.

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citizens and helps them rationalise experiences of interactions and roles in the blended world. Although sometimes viewed as an ambiguous theory, commonalities across multiple interpretations of social constructionist theory recognise how a person's perspective or truth reflects the voices, beliefs, language, and values of those who surround them (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Hair & Fine, 2012; Lynch, 1998; Shotter, 2010). The constructionist theory then shifts the focus to the students' learning processes themselves, rather than the values or beliefs that have framed their interactions in the blended world.

Papert's (1987) constructionism emphasises learning through making artefacts that embody knowledge, such as scripts, character profiles, or devised scenes, while Berger and Luckmann's (1966) social constructionism positions knowledge as created through social interaction and shared meaning. Both perspectives informed this study: students constructed dramatic artefacts in collaboration with peers (constructionism) and co-constructed understandings of citizenship, identity, and responsibility through ensemble-based interactions (social constructionism).

Table 3.1

Key Distinctions Between Constructionism and Social Constructionism

Constructionism (Papert, 1987)	Social Constructionism (Berger & Luckmann, 1966)
Learning through making artefacts	Knowledge shaped through social interaction
Focus on tangible products (scripts, scenes, performances)	Focus on meaning, values, and identities constructed together
Technology as a tool for making and testing concepts	Language and culture frame how experience is understood
Reflection after hands-on creation	Reflection through dialogue and group negotiation

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In this research, students developed both individual and collective artefacts (e.g., scripts, logbook reflections, devised performances) and collectively negotiated meanings as they reflected on these creations within a supportive ensemble.

Constructionism allows students to construct their knowledge practically and collaboratively by participating in a series of meaningful learning experiences and practical problem-solving activities. It enables them to use technology to engage with theoretical concepts while testing and refining their values and beliefs through hands-on exploration. As they do so, they practice and develop knowledge, concepts and skills in an artform, then critically reflect on the processes they have used. This reflection often shifts towards the social, as students consider the values that underpin their final products, connecting back to the views of social constructionism (Iancu, 2018; Keddell, 2011; Papert, 1987). Instead of only receiving information, learners construct meaning through action, supported by technology and framed by student-centred collaboration. At the heart of this approach is the belief, as Papert (1987) suggests, that learning becomes "reconstruction rather than ... transmission of knowledge," and that it is most effective when learners engage in "constructing a meaningful artefact" (Papert, 1987, p. 2). This view places creativity, rather than absorption, at the centre of educational experience.

Constructionism suggests that when participating in an active creative process, students develop an emotional connection towards their 'product' or performance. By combining this with social constructionism, the participants and their peers' emotional connections and knowledge play a crucial role in developing their understanding of citizenship, individual personalities and perspectives of others (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Boal's drama methods link affective engagement with the making of tangible artefacts and performances, connecting students' feelings to the practical work they create and refine.

Students participated in activities that involved making and developing processes, products, and performances when creating and exploring through drama pedagogy. Both social constructionism and constructionism were connected through the teaching and learning

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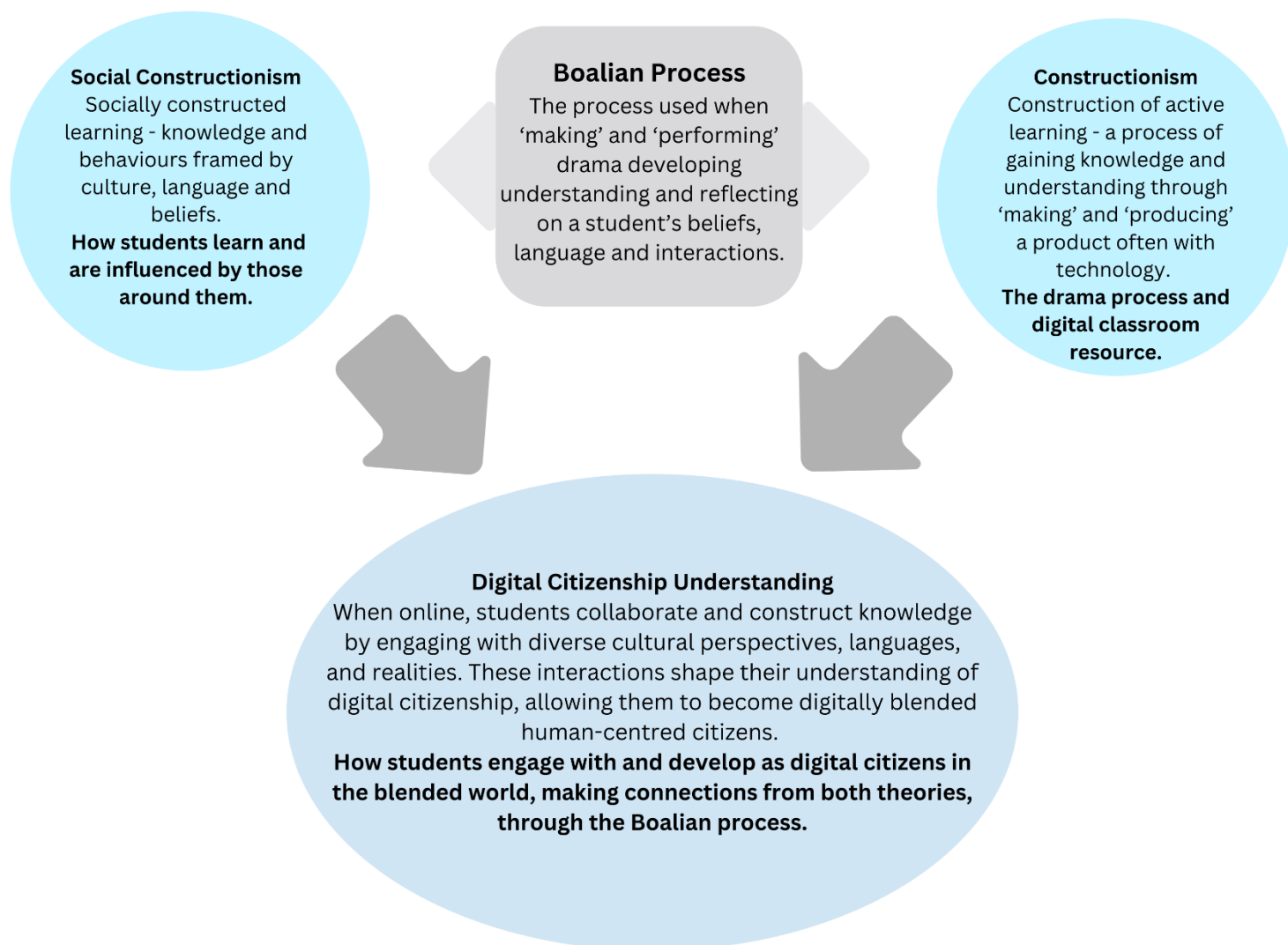
activities based on Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* (Boal, 1979), which centres on the question of “what if?” Rather than operating through the indicative mood of traditional theatre, “I do”, or the imperative mode of “Do!”, Boal’s work, as interpreted by Robinson (2016), adopts the subjunctive mood: “What if I were doing that?” or “What if I were to do this?” Such questioning frames drama as a speculative and reflective process, where students can test behaviours, intentions, and identities through imagined action.

These ideas reflect the core of Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979). Boal’s methods promote change in individuals when they participate in drama by questioning and observing their current behaviours and making personal changes through a reflective theatrical process. When undertaking Boal's exercises, students explore who they are and how they interact in the blended world. In this research, Boal connected both the social constructionist and constructionist theory by providing a pedagogical framework where students playbuilt, discovered, observed themselves, reflected upon the essence of being human, and observed their behaviours in an aesthetic space through an imaginary mirror (Boal, 1995). Boal's drama methods were used in this research to encourage students to question how they have been socially constructed in their values and beliefs and construct new knowledge of how to be citizens in the blended world through drama activities/projects. This research studied how effective this method and learning opportunities are in promoting students to make/create collaborative dramatic representations intended to deepen their understanding of digital citizenship.

Figure 3.1

A Theoretical Framework for Addressing Digital Citizenship Through Drama Pedagogy

Developing Digital Citizenship



Since the development of the 'online social network'²⁰, humans can live and exist in more than one world or reality simultaneously. Our identities are shaped by the people we socialise with and the realities in which those interactions occur. Young people today create multiple identities online, moving between and socialising with vastly different societies and cultures through digital spaces, influencing their interactions within them (Ito et al., 2010).

²⁰ A variety of Internet-based communities of mutual interest: for example, social, professional, or friendship contacts; an online community of people sharing common political or cause-related interests; or a hosting website that enables such communication' (Doyle, 2016).

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How they interact in these digital spaces depends on how those around them influence their behaviour.

Society and reality, as people understand them, are shared and shaped through interactions with others, meaning that reality emerges from the subjective frame of our experiences. This seems pertinent when exploring pedagogical approaches to digital citizenship, as negative issues resulting from poor online behaviours may result from a direct gap of understanding and modelling correct behaviours from those around us. In other words, how can we expect students to model positive online behaviours when they are witnessing or experiencing poor online citizenship?

When students have not yet learnt appropriate ways of interacting via technology, their online behaviours may inadvertently influence the interactions of others, potentially contributing to a cycle of negative engagement and poor digital citizenship. Through the drama pedagogical framework developed in this research, the knowledge of digital citizenship was analysed and explored through the "...process in which it occurs" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) - participating in acts as digital citizens through the drama approaches within the u.b.do teaching and learning program (NSW Department of Education, 2019b; see **Appendix 6**).

This research provided positive learning opportunities where students engaged with a proposed digital citizenship theory and applied that practice using the technology (Keddell, 2011). Students then critically reflected on the theories produced and interacted with their values and beliefs through the Boal drama process. Participants embodied, interacted, played, and reflected on various activities, constructing their knowledge and understanding of the topic framed by Boal's work.

3.3.1 Connecting Theory with Practice: Boal's Influence

Using Boal's framework of *osmosis* (absorbing social oppressions), *metaxis* (an image of the image is as real as the image, or we can live and exist in two worlds at once) and analogical

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induction (understanding through analogy) (Nash, 1995), this research offers students opportunities to draw on both memory and imagination when performing and creating drama, facilitating processes of self-realisation. In doing so, they may reflect on their current situation, evaluate their in-person and online identities, and become more aware of the gap between perception and reality in human-centred digital spaces.

Boal's drama methods connect the emotional and practical products of learning, offering a reflective space for transformation and critique. Rather than viewing theatre as a finished product or passive experience, Boal positions it as a dynamic site of engagement. As Robinson (2016) interprets, theatre becomes a space where we "re-live and observe ourselves better," (p. 5) drawing attention to its role in fostering reflexivity and heightened awareness. In his readings of Boal (1979, 1995), Robinson identifies three features that reinforce theatre's pedagogical strength: its plasticity, which enables flexible expression; its capacity to split the self into both observer and observed; and its ability to magnify everyday events for deeper scrutiny. These characteristics, drawn from Boal's (1995) methods, reveal how theatre can expose the often-unseen layers of human behaviour, especially relevant when exploring the ethical dimensions of digital citizenship.

Through an embodied reflective process, students in this research engaged within a dramatic framework designed to foster awareness of their actions and ethical consideration of others online. As Babbage (2004, p. 65) explains, *Theatre of the Oppressed* (Boal, 1979) "demands change and shows a way in which this might be achieved – even if this is not in the end, the only way," positioning the practice not as prescriptive, but as an open-ended method for provoking social change. Boal's phrase, "the first word of the theatre is the human body" (1979, p. 126), affirms the role of physical presence and expression in shaping meaning through drama. The concept of the spect-actor, previously discussed in the literature review, is activated here through students' participation in digital citizenship learning, where they tested possibilities, navigated dilemmas, and rehearsed responses rather than remaining passive observers.

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To ensure Boal's principles informed the structure and pedagogy of classroom practice, the u.b.do program (NSW Department of Education, 2019b) provided in **Appendix 6**, explicitly applies his theatrical framework in its design. Each lesson drew on conventions or forms from *Theatre of the Oppressed* (Boal, 1979), with activities mapped to his phases of transformation. Image Theatre supported the exploration of emotional responses in digital contexts, Forum Theatre enabled students to intervene in fictionalised online conflicts, and roleplay-based playbuilding allowed students to deconstruct assumptions and generate alternative actions. Instead of treating Boal's ideas as a theoretical backdrop, this design embedded his methods into the core learning experience, offering students a participatory, critical, and imaginative space to examine identity, responsibility, and ethical agency in digitally blended environments.

3.3.1.1 Boal's Framework in Digital Citizenship Contexts

Boal's four-stage framework, embedded within the u.b.do program (NSW Department of Education, 2019b), outlines the progression from spectator to spect-actor. These stages are central to this research, offering a roadmap for understanding the pedagogical processes students experienced. In the context of digital citizenship, this framework guided students through a participatory journey that encouraged critical reflection on their behaviours and supported the construction of new knowledge. The stages are outlined below with corresponding applications in the u.b.do program (NSW Department of Education, 2019b). Each stage was facilitated by teachers and students adopting the Joker role, encouraging reflective inquiry and collaborative meaning-making.

1. Knowing the Body

In this initial stage, participants engaged in exercises to understand the capabilities and limitations of their physical bodies in the human-centred and digital world. In the context of digital citizenship, this involves becoming conscious of their digital presence and understanding the potential impact of online interactions. The research investigated how students responded to roleplaying exercises where they embodied different online personas,

aiming to understand if these experiences fostered an awareness of diverse perspectives in digital interactions. These exercises also enabled students to reflect on their physical representation in the human-centred world.

2. Making the Body Expressive

The next stage encourages participants to express themselves through the body, shedding other forms of expression. This may foster creativity and self-expression in the context of digital citizenship. Through roleplay, students embodied various characters and situations, revealing how dramatic expression supported empathy across digital and offline interaction.

3. Theatre as Language

The third stage emphasises theatre as a living language rather than a finished product. It involves several key components:

a. Simultaneous Dramaturgy²¹

Participants engage in the co-creation of dramatic scenes on the spot, actively participating in defining the narratives of responsible digital behaviour. Students collaboratively scripted and performed scenarios portraying online conflict, enabling them to explore possible resolutions during class. These activities aimed to explore how students negotiated digital conflict resolution. Participants co-created spontaneous scenes of online conflict to rehearse alternative ethical responses.

b. Image Theatre

Image Theatre involves the audience directly, with participants using their bodies to convey emotions, opinions, and messages. This stage encourages students to explore the emotional impact of online interactions and communication. In Image Theatre, students sculpted and responded to one another's body postures, symbolising emotional responses to online communication. These activities were

²¹ Simultaneous dramaturgy aligns with the processes of improvisation, where scenes are created spontaneously, and with playbuilding, which involves the collaborative creation of performances (Boal, 1979; McAvoy & O'Connor, 2022; O'Toole, 1992).

designed to foster empathy and understanding. Students engaged in this technique across multiple lessons, embodying and reflecting on the emotional complexities of digital miscommunication and identity.

c. Forum Theatre

Forum Theatre allows participants to intervene in a dramatic narrative, offering alternative solutions to social or complex problems. This stage encourages students to actively engage in digital citizenship problem-solving. In Forum Theatre, students engaged with digital conflict scenarios, proposing solutions and reshaping narratives to promote ethical online engagement. As Boal stated in an interview with Taussig and Schechner, the purpose of Forum Theatre is not to force people to see a 'truth' but to enable them to learn or become aware of something they did not know before (Taussig & Schechner, 1994). This approach aligns with the goal of improving students' knowledge of digital citizenship, and students re-scripted digital dilemmas in multiple lessons, trialling alternative resolutions to online harm.

4. Theatre as Discourse

In the last stage, 'Theatre as Discourse', participants engage in active discussions and reflections on the themes explored in the preceding stages. It includes a range of techniques (but not limited to):

a. Newspaper Theatre

This technique involves adapting news stories into drama performances, encouraging critical analysis of real-world digital citizenship issues. Students devised and performed skits based on news articles or clickbait headlines, critically examining real-world digital issues. This activity aimed to facilitate discussions about current events and responsible online behaviour. Students used headline texts as stimulus material for playbuilding, prompting discussions on media literacy and digital ethics.

b. Invisible Theatre

Invisible Theatre occurs in unexpected public spaces, creating a public forum for discussions about digital citizenship in everyday life. In these activities, students performed digital citizenship scenarios in shared school spaces, sparking unanticipated discussion and reflection. Students staged performative interventions simulating everyday online exchanges, prompting peer reflection on digital bystander roles and responsibilities.

c. Breaking of Repression

This exercise helps participants confront personal experiences of repression, offering an opportunity for catharsis and empowerment in the digital context. Students shared and playbuilt personal stories of online repression, using dramatic process to navigate resilience and digital safety. These activities aimed to foster resilience and provide a platform for discussing online interactions and their impact. Students revisited experiences of online exclusion or regret, reworking them into performative scenes to explore safer, more constructive responses.

d. Masks and Rituals

This aspect involves participants acting out scenes using social masks reflective of different online personas, challenging and reshaping the meaning of digital identities. The research explored how students engage in dramatic exercises using masks to represent different online personas, aiming to understand the complexities of digital identity and the masks individuals wear in virtual spaces. The use of masks also allows students to explore change, not through a physical sense, but through the perspective of the mutually constituted virtual masks they wear when interacting online (Morrison, 2010). Students applied this technique across multiple lessons to examine how social personas are constructed and performed online, particularly across different platforms and audience contexts.

3.3.1.2 The Joker's Role in Facilitating Digital Citizenship

In the *Theatre of the Oppressed* (Boal, 1979), the Joker operates as a boundary-dweller, an unpredictable and impartial facilitator who destabilises fixed meanings and provokes ethical interrogation (Babbage, 2004; Boal, 1979). This role ensures equitable participation, guiding participants through critical reflection and fostering democratic decision-making (Boal, 1979). By intervening in oppressive dynamics, the Joker enables participants to reimagine scenarios, experiment with strategies for resistance or negotiation, and collectively problem-solve to explore real-world issues through performance, using imagination and playbuilding to construct alternative futures (Boal, 1979; Prentki, 2015; Schutzman, 2006).

The Joker uses the concept of 'magic' to address moments in a performance that may appear predetermined or inevitable, creating an illusion that the events in the performance reflect fixed realities (Boal, 1979; Schutzman, 2019). These moments risk reinforcing passivity in the audience, who may accept the represented action as unavoidable rather than recognising it as an opportunity for exploration and change (Schutzman, 2019). The Joker intervenes in these 'magic' moments by posing critical questions like, "Do you believe this?" or "What could be done differently?" These questions cause participants to interrogate the situation, moving beyond passive observation to active critique and solution-building (Bowman, 1997).

In this research, the Joker's role was adapted to both teachers and students, facilitating the exploration of digital citizenship understanding in the drama class. Instead of guiding the class, the Joker disrupted 'magic' moments that reflected their understanding or behaviours in digital scenarios, such as assumptions about inevitable outcomes in cyberbullying situations, or the unchangeable nature of a digital action, by prompting students to collaboratively imagine alternative scenarios and ethical responses during the playbuilding process (Prentki, 2015). These interventions served as dramatic disruptions, supporting students in constructing responsible digital citizenship through hands-on activities like roleplay, scenario-building, and collaborative dialogue that integrate constructionist and

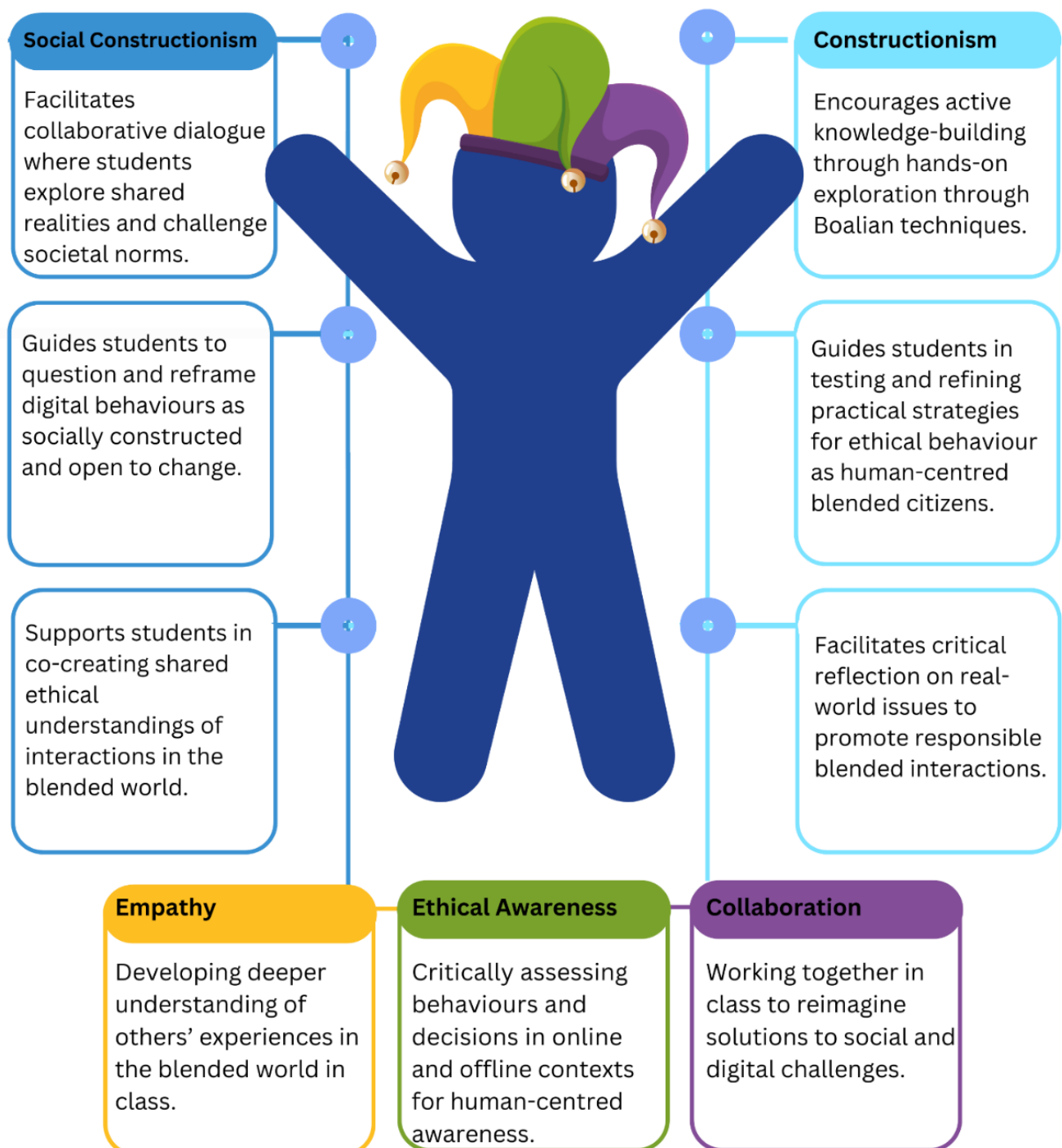
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social constructionist principles (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Papert, 1987). Through their interventions and ability to call 'magic,' teachers or students guide the class toward a deeper understanding of the complexities of the blended world, encouraging them to challenge assumptions and reimagine their roles as active, responsible human-centred blended citizens.

Figure 3.2

The Joker as a Bridge Between Social Constructionism and Constructionism in Digital Citizenship Education

The Joker as Facilitator for Digital Citizenship



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Augusto Boal's methods, informed by social constructionist and constructionist theories (Berger, 2015; Hair & Fine, 2012; Lynch, 1998; Shotter, 2010), informed this research. These methods were applied to explore students' interactions with the four stages of his framework and the role of the Joker in the context of digital citizenship. This research examined whether students and teachers perceive these stages as valuable tools for cultivating responsible online behaviour and understanding digital citizenship comprehensively. The research questions stemmed directly from this framework to guide the investigation into students' and teachers' interactions, behaviours, and perceptions.

3.4 Research Questions and Focus

This research aimed to explore the relationship between digital citizenship understanding and drama pedagogy by addressing the following questions:

1. How do teachers in NSW interpret, understand and approach digital citizenship?
 - a. What issues and approaches had the teachers previously taken when addressing digital citizenship before the research?
 - b. Does a teacher's knowledge and understanding of digital citizenship develop throughout the teaching and learning program?
2. How can drama pedagogy impact a student's understanding of citizenship in a human-centred online world?
 - a. How do the students change the way they interact with others when learning in the blended human-centred and online world?
 - b. How do students reflect upon triggers, techniques or strategies that may affect their wellbeing negatively or positively through drama pedagogy?
3. How do teachers and students interact within the classroom when experiencing and participating in drama pedagogy?
 - a. How do the students and teachers interact, both verbally and through body language, when participating in drama pedagogy in the blended world?

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- b. How well do teachers and students engage with the curriculum aligned approach to digital citizenship?

The sub-questions break down the overarching research questions, allowing for deeper insights into the relationship between pedagogy and digital citizenship. For Question 1, the sub-questions unpack the teachers' approaches when addressing digital citizenship before the research and examine how their perspectives evolved throughout the teaching and learning program. Question 2's sub-questions focus on how drama pedagogy influences students' perceptions of their interactions, particularly concerning behavioural shifts and reflective practices around digital citizenship. Question 3's sub-questions explore how teachers and students interact in the classroom, considering how verbal and non-verbal communication contribute to engagement with drama pedagogy and its alignment with digital citizenship concepts.

By breaking down the broader research questions, the sub-questions provide a structured means of examining teacher and student experiences. The findings and conclusions explicitly engage with these sub-questions, illustrating how drama pedagogy supports ethical digital engagement and responsible blended interactions. When presenting these research questions, I reflected on my role as the researcher, acknowledging how my position within the study may have influenced their design and investigation.

3.5 The Researcher

As a former NSW Creative Arts Advisor²², year advisor, and Drama, Music, Entertainment and English teacher, I bring a deep understanding of the creative arts curriculum and a strong focus on student wellbeing to this research. Considering my experience with drama

²² Creative Arts Curriculum Advisor (SEO2) - A curriculum specialist managing the statewide implementation of Creative Arts (Years 7-12) syllabuses in NSW public schools. This role includes developing teaching resources, professional learning programs, and providing strategic advice on curriculum trends and policies.

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students and my current role as Leader of the Humanities Curriculum²³ at the NSW Department of Education, I approach this research with a practice-informed perspective. These experiences have given me insight into the opportunities and challenges students face as they develop across the continuum of learning.

This background has guided my choice to explore how students navigate digital citizenship through drama pedagogy. My teaching career, which spans rural, remote, and metropolitan NSW, and an overseas stint in South Korea, has allowed me to develop a broad perspective on education, behavioural issues, and student welfare. My passion for student wellbeing, fostered by my experience in various educational contexts, underpins my approach to this research.

3.5.1 Impact of the Researcher

The role of the researcher was clearly articulated to both students and teachers involved in this study to minimise the potential influence of my presence on classroom interactions. This approach aimed to reduce the likelihood of disrupting the natural flow of student interactions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Freebody (2012) explains how a researcher's presence can shape student behaviour and teacher interactions in educational research. I adopted an unobtrusive stance during observations, aligning with established research practices (Richards, 2009) to mitigate this. By limiting my interference, I sought to preserve the authenticity of classroom interactions and ensure that students' behaviours unfolded as naturally as possible within the study's context (Geertz, 1973).

During each case study, I engaged directly with teachers and students only in interviews and focus group sessions, following established qualitative research methods that prioritise research ethics and objectivity (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Maintaining distance during

²³ Leader Humanities (CEO) - A senior leadership position leading curriculum coordinators and advisors, guiding curriculum policy and professional learning in Humanities key learning areas (English, HSIE, Creative Arts, PDHPE, and Languages) for Years 7-12 in NSW public schools. The role involves strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, and curriculum implementation across schools.

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observations allowed participants to explore the research questions without my direct influence while also requiring me to remain attentive to the inherent subjectivity of my role and the potential biases that might emerge (Eisner, 1993).

Since maintaining observational distance limited my opportunity to build rapport with students, the focus groups provided a safe and trusting space among students to encourage honest discussion. This aligns with Morgan's (1997) research, highlighting that group interviews encourage diverse perspectives by allowing participants to shape and deepen their responses through interaction. These discussions offered insight into students' lived experiences, demonstrating how their social roles and individual perspectives influenced their interpretations and interactions in the classroom.

3.6 Required Resources

All research sites delivered the five-week teaching and learning program u.b.do (NSW Department of Education, 2019b) provided in **Appendix 6**. As discussed in the previous chapter, this program addressed digital citizenship through Boal's framework.

3.7 Comparative Case Study

A comparative case study consisting of four Stage 4 and 5 Drama classes from four NSW schools were studied to gain an answer to the proposed research questions. Specific data needed to be identified for this study, meaning that the schools used for this research needed to be public - NSW Department of Education schools, with Stage 5 Drama elective classes, and from separate educational directorates across NSW. The participating teachers were all qualified Drama educators, with experience ranging from early career to highly experienced practitioners. An overview of their years of teaching experience is provided in **Appendix 2a**.

A case study's strength is its ability to provide insights into the study programs and individuals while simultaneously acknowledging diverse perspectives and viewpoints

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(Travers, 2001; Yazan, 2015). The context of this research includes exploring various aspects such as digital citizenship, Boal's framework, and the evolving understanding of both teachers and students throughout the teaching and learning program. Travers (2001) emphasises that meaning is not confined to individual participants but emerges from social interactions, cultural norms, and collective experiences. Consistent with the theoretical framework of this research, meaning emerges through an intersubjective process rather than a purely subjective one. As students actively interpret and respond to shared meanings within their cohort or class, others will likely influence them.

Just as each school is different, a case study aims to explore social phenomena through an in-depth examination of a specific 'case', maintaining a holistic and real-world perspective (Yin & Campbell, 2018). Case studies involve investigations using various research methods to generate insights into my participants' experiences. They provide opportunities for me as the researcher to understand the meanings participants assign to their experiences and how these meanings shape their actions and choices (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Aligned with the comparative case study approach, this research employed a layered, multi-modal interpretive analysis (Dicks, 2019; Flewitt, 2011), allowing for multiple perspectives and interpretations of participants' experiences constructed across verbal, embodied, and artefactual data. Instead of seeking a singular converging truth, this interpretive process embraced the complexity of meaning-making across modalities (Flewitt, 2011), supporting a flexible and iterative analysis grounded in students' reflections, performances, and interactions (Dicks, 2019). Such an approach recognises knowledge as socially and contextually constructed, consistent with the social constructionist and constructionist perspectives underpinning this research (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Papert, 1987). The comparative case study approach also complements this by highlighting shared themes and unique characteristics across different school settings. As Miles and Huberman (2018) suggest, each case shares specific properties with others while possessing distinct traits that allow for deeper comparative analysis. This combined approach and Geertz's (1973)

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emphasis on thick description allow for a nuanced exploration of how digital citizenship and drama pedagogy manifest in diverse educational contexts.

I do not intend to use this research as a one-size-fits-all approach to digital citizenship for every school student. Instead, the objectives revolve around posing critical questions, emphasising the process to encourage reflection, and offering insights that enhance the teaching and learning in NSW schools for Digital Citizenship.

3.8 The Research Sites (Schools)

NSW public schools²⁴ were selected for this research as they provide the diversity of students required for the authenticity of this research. All students and schools have been deidentified and provided pseudonyms in line with ethics requirements. University ethics requirements were met. **Appendix 1a**²⁵ includes the university ethics approval notification.

Before conducting research in NSW Department of Education school, researchers must obtain approval through the State Education Research Applications Process (SERAP) (2019a). This approval ensures that research is well-planned, methodologically sound, and capable of achieving reliable results. After I received SERAP approval, I invited NSW Department of Education teachers to submit an expression of interest via Google Forms to participate in the study. The form was distributed through my social media account to avoid ethical conflicts related to my role, at the time, as Creative Arts Curriculum Advisor. The teachers and schools selected and outlined below were chosen based on contextual factors, including geographic diversity, school size, teacher interest, and whether they had drama classes timetabled. Final participation was subject to the Principal's approval to ensure

²⁴ NSW public schools are part of the largest education system in Australia, including over 2,200 schools, including primary, secondary, and specialist schools such as those in hospitals and juvenile justice facilities (NSW Department of Education, 2024) All NSW schools offer tuition-free education and serve a diverse student population across Metropolitan, Regional, and Rural NSW areas (2024).

²⁵ **Appendix 1** includes all ethics documentation: 1a. University approval, 1b. Parent/Carer Participant Information Statement, 1c. Student Participant Information Statement, 1d. Teacher Participant Information Statement, 1e. Parent/Carer Consent Form, 1f. Student Consent Form, 1g. Teacher Consent Forms, 1h. Principal Letter, 1i. NSW Department of Education SERAP Approval Letter, and 1j. Teacher Interest Survey

alignment with each school's plan and consideration of their local context. **Appendix 1** contains a copy of the letters to the successful school principals-**1h**, contains a copy of the SERAP approval – **1i**, and the teacher EOI interest survey – **1j**.

3.8.1 Montawl High School (2021)

Montawl High School, located on the traditional lands of the Bidjigal people²⁶, northwest region of Greater Sydney, is an academically selective and co-educational secondary school. The school maintains a strong commitment to academic excellence, with students more likely to enrol in subjects aligned with 'academic performance' over 'expressive' subjects within the arts.

In the 2021 Higher School Certificate (HSC)²⁷, 93.31% of students achieved results in the top two bands; however, given the school's selective nature, drama is an uncommon choice for the HSC, as students often prioritise subjects outside the creative arts. This makes Montawl High School a valuable site for exploring student perceptions of identity through the arts.

The school has a student population of approximately 1,200, with 96% from non-English speaking backgrounds and four identifying as Aboriginal. In 2021, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students made up 6.6% of all school enrolments in NSW (ABS, 2021), meaning Montawl's High School's Aboriginal student population was approximately 85% below the state average.

The drama class involved in this research consisted of nine female students, with lessons timetabled once a fortnight. As a highly selective school with a focus on academic performance, Montawl High School has an Index of Community Socio-Educational

²⁶ The Bidjigal people are the traditional Aboriginal custodians of areas now known as western, north-western, south-eastern, and southern Sydney, including the Bidjigal Reserve, Salt Pan Creek, and the Georges River (Horton, 1996).

²⁷ The HSC is the highest secondary education award in NSW, Australia. It is awarded to students who have successfully completed Years 11 and 12, including all coursework requirements and final examinations (NESA, 2025).

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Advantage (ICSEA)²⁸ value of 1207 (99th percentile), reflecting a student body with strong socio-economic advantage. This context provides a unique perspective on how high-achieving students, who typically prioritise traditional academic subjects, engage with drama and its exploration of identity and digital citizenship.

3.8.2 Madike High School (2021)

Madike High School, located on the traditional lands of the Gadigal people²⁹, in central Sydney, is a selective, all-girls secondary school with a student population of approximately 950.

In the 2021 HSC results, Madike High School ranked as the top-performing girls' school in NSW and fourth overall, with two students achieving maximum ATARs³⁰ of 99.95. The school draws students from diverse backgrounds across Greater Sydney, with 89% of students from non-English speaking backgrounds. No students identified as Aboriginal in the year of the study.

The drama class studied in this research consisted of 28 female students, with one student identifying as gender-fluid/male. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, five drama lessons were conducted online as part of the school's transition to remote learning.

With an ICSEA value of 1207 (99th percentile), Madike High School represents a highly advantaged socio-economic context where students excel academically. This environment allows for an exploration of how high-achieving female students navigate digital spaces and express identity through drama education.

²⁸ The ICSEA provides an estimate of the socio-educational backgrounds of students in Australian schools. It considers factors such as parental education and occupation, school location, and the proportion of students from non-English speaking backgrounds. ICSEA scores indicate relative advantage or disadvantage, with higher values reflecting greater socio-educational advantage (ACARA, 2020).

²⁹ The Gadigal people are the traditional Aboriginal custodians of areas now known as central Sydney, including the land on which the Sydney CBD, Circular Quay, and surrounding harbour areas are located (Horton, 1996).

³⁰ The Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) is a percentile ranking between 0 and 99.95 used to indicate a student's position relative to their peers upon completion of senior secondary schooling in Australia (Universities Admissions Centre, 2025).

3.8.3 Tedrain High School (2022)

Tedrain High School, located on the traditional lands of the Darug people³¹ in North-Western Sydney, is a comprehensive, coeducational school with a student population of approximately 850.

The school has a diverse student body, with 10% from non-English speaking backgrounds, 42 students from the Inclusive Education Faculty, and 10 students identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. In 2022, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students made up 6.9% of NSW school enrolments (ABS, 2022), meaning Tedrain's Aboriginal student population was approximately 65% below the state average.

The gender distribution at the school was balanced, with 404 girls and 459 boys. The drama class for this research consisted of 14 students, including three males. Notably, one male and one female student identified as homosexual, expressing comfort in discussing this in the drama classroom.

Tedrain High School's ICSEA value of 1069 places it in the 76th percentile, reflecting moderate socio-economic advantage. Unlike the selective schools in this study, Tedrain provides insight into how a comprehensive school setting explores inclusive, student-led discussions on identity, diversity, for digital citizenship within drama education.

3.8.4 Lupaw High School (2022)

Located on the traditional lands of the Dharawal people³² in southern Sydney, is a comprehensive, coeducational school with a student population of approximately 1,200.

The school has a diverse student body, including 559 boys, 615 girls, and 2.1% of students who did not identify with a binary gender category. The student population includes 4% from

³¹ The Darug people are the traditional Aboriginal custodians of areas now known as Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains, with their traditional lands extending across the Cumberland Plain, including the Hawkesbury River, Blacktown, and Parramatta regions (Horton, 1996).

³² The Dharawal people are the traditional Aboriginal custodians of areas now known as the Illawarra, South Coast, and parts of South-Western Sydney, with their traditional lands extending from the Georges River in the north to the Shoalhaven River in the south (Horton, 1996).

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non-English speaking backgrounds (EAL/D) and approximately 2% identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, totaling 24 students. In 2022, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students made up 6.9% of all NSW school enrolments (ABS, 2022), meaning Lupaw's Aboriginal student population was approximately 16% below the state average.

Lupaw High School promotes academic excellence, resilience, and global citizenship. The drama class in this study consisted of 28 students, including six males. With an ICSEA value of 1088 (82nd percentile), Lupaw High School reflects a moderately advantaged socio-economic setting where students come from diverse backgrounds. As a comprehensive coeducational school with a strong focus on student wellbeing, its drama class offers perspective into how digital citizenship concepts resonate with a broad student demographic, through perspectives of identity, belonging, and ethical engagement in digital spaces.

3.9 Data Collection and Instruments

3.9.1 Interviews

The interview process was designed to capture teachers' perspectives regarding their students' growth and understanding through drama pedagogy, as well as their broader views on digital citizenship and its role in education. After the teachers received and familiarised themselves with the teaching and learning program, they implemented the unit in their classrooms. At the conclusion of the unit, I conducted a one-hour, semi-structured interviews with each teacher, recording their reflections on the program's impact. This approach ensured an authentic representation of the teachers' voices. The Teacher participant information statement is in **Appendix 1d**, Teacher consent forms - **Appendix 1g**, interview timetable - **Appendix 2a**³³, and the list of guiding interview questions – **Appendix 2b**.

The interviews captured the teachers' post-implementation experiences and professional reflections, providing firsthand narratives and insights into their knowledge and concerns

³³**Appendix 2** includes all interview-related documentation: 2a. Interview Timetable and 2b. Teacher Interview Questions.

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directly related to the topic (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). This qualitative method ensured that the teacher's voices are authentically represented and provides a platform for in-depth data analysis and exploration.

Due to COVID-19 lockdowns, three of the four interviews were conducted online via Microsoft Teams, while the remaining interview took place in person. Regardless of the medium, the interviews were scheduled outside of the teachers' mandatory teaching hours, respecting their professional commitments and workload. One of the four teachers involved in this research worked with me to align the time and role with this research as evidence to support their application for Highly Accomplished Lead Teacher accreditation³⁴. The interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis, ensuring the accuracy and opportunity for depth of reflection in each response. While the interviews provided rich insight into teacher perspectives, the focus groups allowed me to explore how students experienced and responded to drama pedagogy in relation to digital citizenship.

3.9.2 Focus Groups

To complement the data gathered through interviews and observations, the design of the focus groups aimed to assist in answering how drama pedagogy can influence students' understanding of digital citizenship. In total, 39 students participated, divided across four research sites. Each focus group consisted of 8-13 students and lasted approximately one hour per session. The full details of the participating groups, their session lengths and word counts for their transcribed sessions are in **Appendix 3a**³⁵.

Students from each class volunteered to participate in these discussions, which were structured to foster an open, conversational space to explore the students':

1. definition of 'digital citizenship.'

³⁴ Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher (HALT) accreditation is a formal recognition of teachers who demonstrate exceptional teaching practices and leadership in educational improvement within their communities across Australia (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2017).

³⁵ **Appendix 3** contains the focus group data: 3a. Focus Group Timetable, 3b. Focus Group Questions, and 3c. Focus Group Participant Hobbies and Pseudonyms by School.

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2. perspective of what it is to be a 'digital citizen' as a result of the drama process
3. changing social perceptions of themselves and their interactions with others through the drama process online (Geraghty, 2012).

The design of the focus groups created an environment where students could openly explore their attitudes and experiences, observe each other's behaviour, and facilitate interaction (Waller et al., 2016). This approach was essential for this research, as focus groups encourage dynamic discussions that reveal both collective and individual impacts of the drama pedagogy on students' perceptions of digital citizenship (Geraghty, 2012). While primarily verbal, focus groups offer unique advantages over other data collection methods. According to Morgan (1997), focus groups facilitate a wider range of behaviours, interactions, and more open discussion on the research topic within the structure set by the researcher, allowing me to document these interactions in rich, contextually grounded data essential for understanding digital citizenship in an educational setting.

Krueger (1997) cautions, however, that relying solely on verbal responses in focus groups can be limiting, as participants may vary in how precise or deliberate they are in expressing their thoughts. To mitigate this risk, I designed the questions and activities to encourage thoughtful, reflective, and honest student discussions. I paid particular attention to non-verbal communication, including body language, facial expression, and tone, which could provide further insight into students' developing understanding as they engaged with each other during the discussions.

I wrote the focus group questions to gather data on students' conceptualisations and experiences of digital citizenship and assess the effectiveness of drama pedagogy in facilitating meaningful connections to their roles as citizens in both online and offline (face-to-face) worlds. This data will assist in demonstrating how the program supported students in recognising and reflecting on the "effects we [they] have in people's lives" as citizens in both worlds, moving beyond a rules-based approach to digital citizenship (Freedman & Combs, 1996). The questions that guided the focus group discussions are outlined in **Appendix 3b**

and written to provoke deep reflection and critical engagement with the themes of digital citizenship within the context of their drama-based learning experiences.

3.9.3 Observations

Throughout the teaching and learning program, fifteen hours of observations³⁶ were planned and undertaken to generate answers to how teachers and students interact within the classroom environment when experiencing and participating in the drama pedagogy.

'Naturalistic observation is a technique for the collection of data that are, in the ideal at least, as unobtrusive as possible.'(Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 467).

The total number of observation hours across the four schools was approx. 24 hours, as follows:

- Montawl High School (6 hours),
- Madike High School (3 hours in-person, 5 hours online),
- Tedrain High School (5 hours), and
- Lupaw High School (5 hours).

Each observation session lasted between 55 to 120 minutes, depending on the school's timetable.

The choice of observations for this study came from the need to closely examine the engagement and interactions between teachers and students within a blended online and offline environment. As the researcher, I emphasised analysing both the verbal and performative language used by participants during classroom interactions. This focus is grounded in the understanding that language shapes the social contexts in which realities are constructed (Geraghty, 2012). In drama-based research, this includes the embodied and relational dimensions of communication. As Saldaña (2021) explains, "Coding and analysing a participant – actor's performative features can tell you much about his or her presentation

³⁶ 1 period is approximately 1 hour. 5 hours = 5 periods per week. 3 weeks observation = 15 hours.

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of self to others and reveal additional insights into subtexts, body image, self-concept, confidence, impression management, social interaction, intelligence status, work ethic, health and other details through observing the routine business of daily living and working” (p. 190). This informed how I conducted the observations throughout the course of the research, particularly in attending to students’ embodied behaviours and social interactions within the drama space.

Observations were undertaken across the first, third, and fifth weeks of the u.b.do teaching and learning program (NSW Department of Education, 2019b; see **Appendix 6**), allowing for a balanced view of the pedagogical journey from the introduction to the conclusion. This approach aimed to provide insights into the teacher-student rapport and the development of drama pedagogy in fostering digital citizenship competencies over time.

COVID-19 lockdowns prevented some face-to-face observations, and the study’s design allowed students and teachers to still interact effectively online via Microsoft Teams and continue their learning in line with syllabus requirements. This ensured that the observations of student collaboration and interaction within digital spaces still provided a picture of how digital citizenship themes were negotiated and enacted by students during online activities. A full breakdown of the observation schedule, including specific lesson numbers, locations, dates, formats, and session durations, is provided in **Appendix 4a**³⁷.

3.9.4 Data Transcription

I opted for a comprehensive transcription strategy for this research that involved transcribing all data sources, including focus groups, interviews³⁸, and class observations. In this approach, the transcriptions serve as the foundation for in-depth analysis. According to Saldaña (2021), transcription should be part of the initial coding process, providing an

³⁷ **Appendix 4** includes the observation data: 4a. Observation Timetable and 4b. Observation Transcript Sample.

³⁸ All interviewed teachers were provided with their transcripts and confirmed their accuracy.

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immediate layer of analysis (p. 52). I transcribed the data while coding, which allowed me to shape the initial analytical framework as I processed the data.

During the observations, I recorded the classes and took observational notes while coding my initial insights in real-time. I then transcribed the recordings and combined the transcripts with my observational notes, treating them as if they were scripts of a live performance. This method reflects the dynamic nature of classroom interactions, much like a play where the actors (participants) and the audience (myself, as the researcher) engage in the evolving narrative as it's performed. I then coded the transcripts as though reflecting on the performance, further refining the meaning, as I moved through the entire dataset.

This process is aligned with the 'live coding' concept described by Parameswaran, Ozawa-Kirk, and Latendresse (2020), where coding co-occurs with transcribing data, fostering a real-time engagement with the qualitative material. The analogy of a live actor-audience relationship is crucial here. As the researcher, I was not just transcribing but also interacting with the data, drawing out its meaning in real-time, much like how an audience responds to a performance (Saldaña, 2021, p. 81).

By transcribing the spoken words and incorporating my notes on nonverbal cues and classroom dynamics, I captured the authenticity of participants' voices, movements and actions. This method is critical in an educational setting where nonverbal communication often conveys as much, if not more, than verbal exchanges. This 'live coding' approach allowed me to document interactions and behaviours with depth and detail, adding layers to the analysis that might not have been captured through verbal transcriptions alone (Parameswaran et al., 2020; Saldaña, 2021, p. 81). An example of an observation transcript is provided in **Appendix 4b**.

3.10 Data Analysis

Analysis

Interviews, focus groups, observation notes, recordings, and work samples were critically analysed and reflected on through the theoretical lenses framing this research design. The data analysis was guided through a structured coding process that involved dissecting the voices from the transcripts into categories and themes for in-depth exploration (Gibbs, 2007). This process categorised the data in a way that draws connections to the themes of the questions and provides clear opportunities to make connections and comparisons across the complete dataset (Spencer et al., 2003).

To ensure integrity and avoid bias, the data was recorded, categorised, coded, interpreted and mapped to each research question during the collection, immediately after and throughout the collection phase. Continually refined while reporting the findings, this process guaranteed a faithful representation of each participant's perspective. Transparent coding and interpretive strategies were informed by Creswell's (2014) emphasis on systematic qualitative analysis and reflexivity, supporting efforts to minimise the influence of prior professional experience.

This robust data analysis process identified connections between the research concerns and the coded data within the transcripts and observations, supporting my interpretations with a structured methodology. I used a combination of coding and thematic analysis to identify connections between research concerns and the coded data (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Braun & Clarke, 2006). The following steps summarise the process:

1. **Familiarisation with the data:** This phase involved reading and re-reading the transcripts of interviews, focus groups, and classroom observations; initial observations and notes to identify patterns and insights across the data.
2. **Raw text > relevant text:** Relevant sections of the transcripts were selected based on the research focus, reducing the data into manageable and analysable sections.

3. **Generating initial codes:** A systematic approach used to develop initial codes based on key concepts from the transcribed data. Descriptive codes first captured the recurring themes, followed by In Vivo codes, reflecting participants' words and phrases (Saldaña, 2021).
4. **Searching for themes:** Initial codes were grouped into broader themes, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences and perceptions. This phase connected individual codes to emerging thematic patterns related to digital citizenship.
5. **Reviewing themes:** Themes were reviewed and cross-referenced with the coded data to ensure accuracy. I then refined the themes to align with the research concerns, allowing for a deeper exploration of how participants expressed concepts across different data sources.
6. **Defining and naming themes:** Once reviewed, themes were clearly defined and named, clarifying how each theme connected to the research questions and theoretical framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006).
7. **Theoretical constructs > theoretical narrative** – I then refined the themes into broader theoretical constructs and integrated them into a narrative that addressed the core research concerns and questions. This narrative connected the findings to the theoretical underpinnings of the study.
8. **Producing the report** – Finally, the analysis concluded in the four findings chapters through a layered, multi-modal interpretive approach, integrating verbal, embodied, and artefactual data to enrich the overall discussion of students' meaning-making.

When writing the findings, I considered all participants' perspectives, carefully examining those that might contradict my initial views. I adopted a critically engaged approach to interpreting the data, applying an informed subjectivity that acknowledged my role in shaping the analysis. Through an iterative process, I balanced ethical considerations with participants' lived experiences. All data was carefully handled with respect to participants'

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privacy, and findings were presented in adherence to ethical guidelines to ensure confidentiality and research integrity (Creswell, 2014). The following section outlines the broader analytical approach and details the specific coding methods used to extract insights from the data.

Coding Process

Data coding is crucial in extracting meaningful insights from case studies. This process adopted a systematic approach, incorporating descriptive coding as the initial step, followed by In Vivo coding³⁹, and concluding with a layered, multi-modal interpretive analysis that integrated meaning across verbal, embodied, and artefactual data (Dicks, 2019; Flewitt, 2011). Each stage contributed a new perspective for me to consider and explore, aiming for a balanced understanding of participants' experiences and perspectives. By studying individual objectives and tactics, this analysis deepened the understanding of power relationships, identity shifts, and the processes of human agency within the blended world (Saldaña, 2021). The coding process was iterative, ensuring that patterns emerged organically, and I revisited them as needed to refine meanings and connections.

1. Descriptive Coding

The first step in the analysis involved generating a comprehensive list of subtopics that captured the surface-level content of the data (Saldaña, 2021). "Descriptive coding generates a sufficient list of subtopics = what is talked about – but generally does not offer the analyst insightful meanings about the participants and their perspectives" (Saldaña, 2021). Descriptive coding helps identify 'what is talked about' and is critical in establishing an overview of the data. At this stage, I began by categorising the large volume of interview, observation, and focus group transcripts into manageable, identifiable chunks.

³⁹ In Vivo coding involves capturing participants' exact words as codes to preserve their voices and perspectives (Saldaña, 2021).

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For instance, repeated descriptive codes included terms like ‘empathy’, ‘blocking a person’, and ‘digital footprint’. These codes reflected initial impressions of how students and teachers navigated digital citizenship and drama pedagogy. However, as Saldaña (2021) argues, descriptive coding alone doesn’t offer deep insights into meaning-making processes. Instead, it provides a map for more detailed exploration later in the process.

The Descriptive Coding Matrix included in **Appendix 5b**⁴⁰ outlines the primary descriptive codes identified during this stage. This table shows how specific terms were linked to initial research questions and thematic patterns.

2. In Vivo Coding

Following descriptive coding, the analysis transitioned to In Vivo coding, which emphasised the use of participants' actual language to capture their voices more authentically (Saldaña, 2021). As Saldaña (2021) explains, “The root meaning of Invivo is “in that which is alive,” and as code refers to a word or short phrase from the actual language found in the qualitative data record, “the terms used by [participants] themselves” (Strauss, 1987, as cited in Saldaña, 2021, p.137). This approach allowed for action-oriented coding, preserving the participants' lived experiences by capturing their language and perspectives as accurately as possible.

For instance, students from Lupaw High School used phrases like “we wear different masks in society” (Cassie) and “things online can be faked easily” (Jake) to express the fluidity of their online identities and their caution in digital interactions. At Madike High School, Jasmine noted, “The things that we do online and the way that we interact with others offline have kind of bled into one joint thing,” reflecting the merging of online and offline identities that is particularly relevant in today’s digital culture.

⁴⁰**Appendix 5** includes data analysis materials: 5a. Summary of Coding Methods, 5b. Descriptive Coding Matrix, 5c. Codes and Themes, and 5d. Themes Mapped to Research Questions and Findings.

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These vivid expressions provided insights into how students navigated the complex dynamics of digital citizenship. In Vivo coding outlines the recurring themes and amplifies students' reflections on identity shifts, trust, and how they construct their personas across different platforms. The In Vivo codes are detailed in **Appendix 5**, next to the descriptive codes, showing how the words used by participants relate to the broader themes that emerged throughout the analysis that emerged throughout the analysis. These themes, which highlighted shifts in student and teacher perspectives, were then mapped to the overarching research questions to clarify how drama pedagogy influenced the understanding digital citizenship.

3. Layered, Multi-Modal Interpretive Analysis

As the final stage of the coding process, a layered, multi-modal interpretive analysis enabled a multifaceted interpretation of the data by integrating student reflections, performances, and symbolic representations to explore the depth of participants' experiences (Dicks, 2019; Flewitt, 2011). This phase added richness to the analysis by allowing meaning to emerge across verbal, embodied, and artefactual forms, moving beyond traditional coding methods.

As the researcher, I interpreted different dimensions of the participants' lived experiences by incorporating their reflective statements or drawings, roleplaying exercises, and performative elements from the drama activities. This included how students explored masks and personas online and in the drama classroom to better understand identity shifts in digital spaces.

For example, students used metaphors such as 'wearing masks' to discuss how they navigate online identities, reflecting how digital interactions often involve performative layers. The drama pedagogy allowed students to engage with these themes symbolically, revealing the emotional and social complexities of being digital citizens. This gave the participants a reflective space to express these ideas through performance, enabling a deeper analysis of how they developed their identity and empathy.

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This layered analysis was essential in this context, as it allowed me to connect these symbolic insights to the broader research concerns about digital citizenship. Through this process, I interpreted the data through words and the students' embodied experiences as they acted out roles and scenarios. This richer, artistic engagement provided insights that might not have emerged from verbal or written data alone.

Appendix 5d, Codes and Themes Table, demonstrates how this analytic process contributed to the development of key themes and their alignment with the research questions.

Integration and Refinement

This iterative coding process allowed for continuous refinement and validation as I identified emerging themes and patterns. Each stage of coding built upon the previous one, generating a holistic understanding of how students and teachers engage with digital citizenship through drama pedagogy. I revisited the identified themes multiple times to ensure they aligned with the research questions and theoretical frameworks driving the study. The integration of these coding methods allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the data, capturing what was said and expressed through artistic, symbolic, and performance-based means.

As the coding methods unfolded, it became clear that the emergent themes directly related to the core research questions of the study. For example:

- Theme 1: Responsible Use of Technology and Digital Platforms (coded as RUT) explored how teachers in NSW interpret and approach digital citizenship, directly addressing Research Question 1.
- Theme 8: Empathy and Understanding (coded as EU) provided valuable insights into how students shifted their perceptions of digital interactions and empathy, reflecting Research Question 3b.

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Themes (like the examples above) were cross-referenced with the research questions and their corresponding coding schemes to ensure each insight was grounded in the participants' experiences.

The Themes mapped to research questions and findings table in **Appendix 5d** details the mapping between codes, themes, research questions, and findings chapters. This table demonstrates how the data analysis process was methodologically aligned to address the core concerns of this research, and it provides transparency in linking specific themes to the corresponding findings chapters where they are discussed.

Throughout the analysis, the layered, multi-modal interpretive approach played a fundamental role in drawing together diverse perspectives into a coherent analytical narrative. This interpretive process ensured that the participants' voices and the symbolic representations from Boal's methods were fully integrated into the study's conclusions. This enriched the depth of the analysis and contributed to a more holistic interpretation of how students and teachers navigate the blended world.

Appendix 5a outlines the comprehensive coding process that laid the groundwork for the findings chapters, where these themes are further analysed to demonstrate how drama pedagogy influences students' understanding of digital citizenship. **Appendix 5d** provides a detailed view of how each theme connects to the research questions, ensuring transparency and clarity in how the empirical data aligns with the theoretical concerns of this study.

3.11 Validity and Authenticity

Addressing issues of validity and authenticity in qualitative research is essential, especially when considering credibility, plausibility, and resonance. These elements are fundamental to ensure that my study on digital citizenship through drama pedagogy is robust, reliable and beneficial to the field of education. By delving into the pedagogical context and capturing participant experiences through thick descriptions, this research aims to provide a detailed understanding through credible findings. Thick description, which involves comprehensively

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understanding the context of observed behaviours to uncover their meaning and relevance, is the backbone of this nuanced comprehension (Geertz, 1973; Leeds-Hurwitz, 2019).

Complementing thick descriptions with reflective practice, I can critically consider my biases, assumptions, and background, further reinforcing the study's credibility (Berger, 2015). This self-awareness ensures that interpretations and conclusions reflect participant experiences, grounding the research in authenticity rather than my own preconceptions.

My research's plausibility comes from its methodological rigour and findings, which are based on solid research practices and logically align with the data. Ethical practices, including adherence to confidentiality and informed consent, along with respectful engagement with participants, further strengthen its credibility.

Highlighting the participants' voices through a layered, multi-modal interpretive approach and narrative has been central to my aim for achieving resonance and connecting the study with readers on a personal and emotional level (Mertova & Webster, 2020). I consistently aim to focus on what students and teachers say and experience, making it genuine and valuable for teaching. By listening to and detailing participants' stories and performances, I aimed to ensure the research was not just theoretical but also practical. This approach puts students and their experiences at the centre, showing how our findings can help improve teaching methods and curriculum development. Through close attention to the experiences shared by participants, this research not only adds to academic discussions but also offers practical suggestions for making digital citizenship a more integral and influential part of education.

This research aims to establish a solid foundation of validity and authenticity by integrating credibility, plausibility, and resonance. The deliberate integration of thick description, reflective practices, and a focus on participant voices ensures that the findings are trustworthy and meaningful, highlighting the impactful role of drama pedagogy in digital citizenship education.

3.12 Ethical Issues

This study posed no serious ethical problems. Appropriate bodies, such as The NSW Department of Education and the University of Sydney Ethics Committee, approved the consent obtained from all participants involved in this research. As mentioned earlier, all ethics documents appear in **Appendix 1**. Teachers volunteered to participate in the study, and throughout the duration of the study, they understood that their involvement was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time. While the Department published the u.b.do resource (NSW Department of Education, 2019b) and approved the research through the SERAP process, the research was conducted independently and was not designed as an evaluation of departmental policy or to produce direct benefits for the Department. This was made clear to all participants to maintain transparency and minimise perceived bias.

As the u.b.do resource (NSW Department of Education, 2019b) was aligned with the NSW curriculum, the research also did not detract students from engaging with the required syllabus outcomes. The program was designed for Stage 4 and 5 Drama, and supported learning within the Drama curriculum, rather than replacing or displacing it. The u.b.do resource was published online and made freely available to all NSW public school teachers via the Department's website; teachers could access the full course materials without being expected to take on duties that diverged from their usual teaching responsibilities. I did not provide training or direct support to the participating teachers, as the program included all necessary teaching and learning materials and already aligned with existing syllabus content.

Students who participated in the research undertook the study during their allocated drama class time. This ensured that it did not adversely affect students' work in other key learning areas, or draw them away from other school wellbeing or curriculum priority areas. Below is a screenshot of the NSW 7-10 Drama Syllabus (BOS, 2003) objectives and outcomes addressed in the u.b.do resource (NSW Department of Education, 2019b) and included in **Appendix 6**.

Table 3.2

u.b.do Exploring Through Doing Program (NSW Department of Education, 2019b)

Objectives

Students will develop:

Objectives	Stage 4 outcomes	Stage 5 outcomes
Making	A student: 4.1.2 improvises and play builds through group devised processes 4.1.3 devises and enacts drama using scripted and unscripted material 4.1.4 explores a range of ways to structure dramatic work in collaboration with others.	A student: 5.1.2 contributes selects, develops and structures ideas in improvisation and play building 5.1.3 devises, interprets and enacts drama using scripted and unscripted material 5.1.4 explores, structures and refines ideas using dramatic forms, performance styles and dramatic techniques (Boal) and technologies.
Performing	A student: 4.2.3 explores and uses aspects of dramatic forms, performance styles, theatrical conventions and technologies to create dramatic meaning.	A student: 5.2.3 employs a variety of dramatic forms, performance styles, dramatic techniques, theatrical conventions and technologies to create dramatic meaning.
Appreciating	A student: 4.3.2 recognises the function of drama and theatre in reflecting social and cultural aspects of human experience.	A student: 5.3.2 analyses the contemporary and historical contexts of drama

Life Skills

Objectives	Outcomes
1. Making drama that explores a range of imagined and created situations in a collaborative drama and theatre environment	LS.1.1 explores characters, roles, situations and actions through drama activities LS.1.2 explores a variety of playbuilding activities LS.1.3 participates in drama experiences in which role-taking is used to enhance their understanding of ideas and feelings
2. Performing devised and scripted drama using a variety of performance techniques, dramatic forms and theatrical conventions to engage an audience	A student: LS.2.1 explores dramatic forms and theatrical conventions LS 2.2 participates in the preparation of drama works and theatrical productions
3. Appreciating the meaning and function of drama and theatre in reflecting the personal, social, cultural, aesthetic and political aspects of the human experience.	A student: LS.3.1 experiences a variety of drama or theatre performances LS.3.2 identifies and responds to the elements of drama or theatre in performances LS.3.3 recognises that drama and theatre performances can communicate meaning and ideas.

Drama 7-10 Syllabus © NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) for and on behalf of the Crown in right of the State of New South Wales, 2003.

All materials aimed to enhance wellbeing and prosocial behaviour by enabling a physically and psychologically safe student environment throughout the study. Parents and carers were provided with an overview of the teaching and learning program in their information form and the research materials focusing on privacy, student wellbeing, and child protection (available in **Appendix 1**). Schools, staff, and students involved in the study remained confidential and are referred to by pseudonyms during the findings chapters.

In the u.b.do resource, Invisible Theatre was used as a method to explore digital citizenship, allowing students to engage with social dilemmas in real time without an identified audience (Babbage, 2004; Boal, 1979; NSW Department of Education, 2019b). This approach fosters authentic interactions and critical reflection while introducing ethical complexities (Babbage, 2004; Mitchell et al., 2012; Tudorache, 2019). Burstow (2008) highlights that deception is a fundamental characteristic of Invisible Theatre and raises concerns about whether participants' lack of awareness compromises ethical integrity. The ethical dilemma in this

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research lay in whether using deception as a methodological tool within a structured classroom setting was justified in fostering students' critical engagement with digital citizenship.

To address this, the activities in this research were delivered by teachers in a controlled classroom setting, with students guided through structured reflections to process their experiences. Mitchell et al. (2012) emphasise the need for ethical oversight in Invisible Theatre due to the potential for unintended emotional responses. While unpredictability strengthens the method, it also requires careful scaffolding to prevent undue distress. Students in this study were encouraged to engage critically with their roles, knowing they could step out of the activity to "cool down" if needed (Tudorache, 2019, p. 45), a strategy Boal (1979) also recognises as necessary for ethical practice.

Boal (1979) argues that unpredictability is central to the transformative power of Invisible Theatre, as it compels participants to react as they would in real-world situations; however, Burstow (2008) critiques that the lack of awareness could leave participants feeling manipulated or emotionally unsettled, especially when they are unaware of their role in a performative act. The lessons within this research addressed these concerns through structured debriefing and embedded ethical reflection, ensuring students had opportunities to process their experiences and articulate their perspectives within a supportive classroom environment. Such concerns resonate with broader discussions in drama education about the need for careful boundaries and ethical facilitation.

Within these debates, O'Toole (1992, 2009) explains how intensity and risk must be consciously managed, using strategies such as framing and role distance to help students feel secure and in control. Nicholson (2011) extends this more broadly by describing an ethics of relation, where trust and sensitivity to participants' contexts shape ethical practice. Gallagher (2018) adds that when real-world dilemmas are re-enacted through performance, the teacher's responsibility extends beyond managing dramatic structure to sustaining care and support for students. These insights were evident in how teachers structured the work in

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this study: debriefing after each activity, encouraging reflection, and allowing students to step out of role when needed. Such practices created a supportive and responsive environment in which even complex or unsettling scenarios could be explored.

This study maintained ethical integrity by positioning Invisible Theatre within a teacher-led classroom while preserving the method's immersive qualities. This balance ensured that I carefully considered and mitigated ethical risks, allowing students to explore digital scenarios in an environment that encouraged responsibility and critical agency.

3.13 Anticipated Problems and Limitations

Principals were asked to inform the classroom teacher or myself of unusual student wellbeing concerns related to poor online citizenship before the study began. This step ensured a consistent, safe, and productive educational environment for all students. While the research design is non-confrontational, emotional issues could arise unexpectedly due to past experiences. In such cases, I worked with the teacher to negotiate alternative options, allowing the student to opt out of specific activities to prevent further distress.

3.14 Covid Impact

The period from 2020 to 2022 introduced significant challenges to data collection due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Lockdowns and school restrictions prevented me from conducting all of the planned in-person observations at one of the research sites, requiring adaptations to the methodology. At Madike High School, five class observations occurred online via Microsoft Teams instead of in person. This limited my ability to fully capture non-verbal cues, embodied interactions, and spontaneous peer engagement. While breakout rooms allowed for some insight into group collaboration, the online format restricted my ability to observe the depth of student interaction, teacher facilitation, and performative elements of drama activities in real time.

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Technological and logistical constraints also shaped the research environment for these online observations. Some students experienced unstable internet connections, limited device access, and fluctuating engagement levels during online learning. These factors may have impacted how students expressed themselves in digital spaces compared to a traditional drama classroom. While the online context provided insights into digital citizenship behaviours, it also introduced conditions distinct from in-person learning environments.

In addition to the observations, I also conducted three of the four teacher interviews online. While this ensured continued data collection, the online setting may have influenced teacher responses, as interactions lacked the organic flow of dialogue that in-person conversations may have facilitated. The setup process also required additional time for technical checks, adjusting cameras and microphones, and managing environmental distractions, which may have affected the initial flow of discussion before interviews began.

These constraints redefined my role as a researcher. Unlike in an in-person setting, where I could directly observe classroom dynamics and interact informally with students and teachers, the online format required greater reliance on teacher facilitation and participant self-reporting. This may have influenced the interpretation of student engagement and limited the ability to document subtle contextual factors that shape drama pedagogy experiences.

Despite these challenges, the methodological adaptations ensured the study remained robust. Structured observations, teacher-guided discussions, and iterative data analysis provided a comprehensive dataset reflective of the blended world students navigate; however, these limitations must be considered when assessing the transferability of findings, particularly regarding how in-person drama pedagogy might provoke different responses compared to online representations.

3.15 Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have outlined the qualitative research design adopted to explore the connections between drama pedagogy and digital citizenship, framed within the theoretical perspectives of social constructionism and constructionism. By delving into the subjective experiences of teachers and students engaged in the research, this study aims to identify the dynamics of identity within the blended world.

Integrating Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* Boal (1979) within the drama teaching and learning program, I explore the pedagogical potential of drama to foster an understanding of digital citizenship. "Selected qualitative researchers employ *Theatre of the Oppressed* for such purposes as participant diagnostics, data-gathering methods, stimuli for participant reflection and dialogue, action research to create positive social change within communities, and therapeutic modalities with selected populations" (Saldaña 2023). This methodology champions the active participation and agency of students.

The experiential learning environment within the drama classroom allowed me, as the researcher, to analyse data gathered through teacher interviews, classroom observations, and student focus groups. The following chapters aim to provide insights into how drama pedagogy fosters the development of digital citizenship. The anticipated insights from this research highlight how teachers can guide students through the evolving digital landscape using critical thinking, creativity, and compassion. This approach prepares students to thrive as informed, empathetic citizens in a digitally interconnected world.

The theoretical underpinnings of this research and its practical exercises aim to highlight the transformative power of drama pedagogy and set the stage for a broader conversation about the role of education in nurturing a digitally literate and socially responsible generation. The following chapters will further articulate the implications of these pedagogical innovations and explore their potential to reshape educational practices, policy and curriculum development.

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By piecing together theory, practice, and reflection, this study aims to write a narrative that advocates for a holistic approach to digital citizenship education, integrating the dramatic processes that enrich the learning experiences of young citizens navigating the complexities of the digitally connected modern world.

Introduction to the Findings

The next four chapters present the findings from the four research sites, examining the impact of drama pedagogy on students' wellbeing and their understanding of digital citizenship. These chapters are structured around the overarching research questions, tracing key developments across the study and documenting the progression of the research narrative.

Chapter Four introduces digital citizenship through drama pedagogy, focusing on the implementation process observed across the four sites. It captures the initial reactions from the teachers and students, examines their preliminary understanding of digital citizenship, and explores how drama pedagogy was introduced as an interactive method to deepen their engagement with these concepts. This chapter outlines the challenges and successes of the implementation process, providing context for how the use of roleplay and reflective exercises helped shift students' and teachers' perceptions of digital citizenship.

Chapter Five explores how student behaviour and perceptions changed as they engaged with drama pedagogy. It outlines key shifts in students' understanding of digital citizenship and their reflections on direct actions. This chapter documents the gradual development of critical reflection, empathy, and ethical decision-making, showing how students moved from passive engagement to more active and thoughtful participation. Throughout this chapter, I demonstrate how student responses progressed during the program, offering insights into how drama activities shaped their interactions in digital spaces.

Chapter Six examines the skills and competencies developed through drama pedagogy, focusing on areas such as digital awareness, empathy, and critical thinking. It considers how these competencies emerged as students engaged in drama activities, shifting from passive learners to active participants in digital spaces. It emphasises the development of problem-solving abilities and ethical decision-making, demonstrating how drama pedagogy provided students with practical opportunities to navigate complex online scenarios. This chapter

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captures how students internalised these competencies, reflecting a deeper understanding of digital citizenship.

Chapter Seven provides a reflective synthesis of the program's impact, drawing on final insights from students and teachers. It outlines key outcomes observed throughout the research, focusing on how drama pedagogy shaped students' understanding of digital citizenship. This chapter includes reflections on the shifts in student behaviour, critical reflection, and the development of ethical awareness in the digital world, offering a comprehensive view of the short-term impacts of the program. The reflections highlight the potential of drama pedagogy in fostering responsible digital citizenship, with a focus on immediate outcomes rather than long-term educational impacts.

Throughout the findings, I reference the data sources: Observation (O), Focus Group (FG), or Interview (I) - in conjunction with the corresponding themes identified in **Appendix 5 - Data results**. For instance, an interview quote aligned with the theme 'General Focus on Digital Citizenship' is referenced as (I-GFDC). This method ensures that the data is transparently linked to the research themes, reinforcing the narrative of how drama pedagogy enhanced students' understanding of digital citizenship within both human-centred and online contexts.

4 Introducing Digital Citizenship through Drama Pedagogy

The chapter addresses the research question: 'How do teachers in NSW interpret, understand, and approach digital citizenship?' The chapter focuses on understanding the challenges and successes of introducing drama pedagogy to teach digital citizenship. It begins by examining teachers' initial interpretations of digital citizenship, their preparedness to integrate these concepts into their teaching, and their reactions to using drama as a pedagogical tool. The development of teachers' knowledge and understanding of digital citizenship throughout the teaching and learning program is analysed, providing insights into how drama approaches can enhance student understanding of digital citizenship.

4.1 Teacher Preparedness

This section of the chapter investigates how teachers in NSW understand and approach digital citizenship and the methods they had previously used in their schools before the research. Interviews with all four teachers provided insights into their preparedness, initial perspectives, and understanding of digital citizenship. The teachers perceived their preparedness to integrate digital citizenship concepts into their teaching as limited, with a primary focus on basic online safety and ethical behaviour. Neelands (2009) emphasises the transformative potential of drama in fostering collaboration, empathy, and ethical awareness. He describes how a collaborative and empathetic learning space in drama allows students to engage deeply with social and ethical issues. Mrs Thomas observed similar changes in her students, noting an increase in empathy and cooperation during drama exercises. The drama exercises encouraged her students to reflect on their roles in online and offline interactions, illustrating how drama can actively promote prosocial behaviour, as Neelands suggests. Research by Mattson (2017) supports this idea further with her focus on experiential learning for enhancing a students' capacity for ethical reflection and community engagement. The findings from Mrs Thomas' classroom show how students began to critically reflect on their behaviours, demonstrating that drama can be a powerful tool for

embedding digital citizenship concepts into practice and supporting the broader goal of fostering responsible digital engagement in students, aligning with the objectives of digital citizenship education. Further detailed observations and reflections from all four teachers will be discussed later in the chapter to explore how their understanding of digital citizenship evolved throughout the study, especially in the context of using drama to teach ethical and social responsibility.

Initially, all teachers stated they had a general understanding (GFDC)⁴¹ of digital citizenship, primarily focusing on the responsible use of technology and online platforms, consistent with findings from Martin, Gezer and Wang (2019). This aligns with Ribble's (2015) concept of digital citizenship, which emphasises safety, etiquette, and responsible online behaviour as foundational. Reichert (2016) also found that many teachers' understanding of digital citizenship is often limited to these areas, lacking engagement with broader ethical considerations. Dialogue between teachers and students within the classroom observations and from interview responses further confirmed these findings. The teachers also acknowledged in their interviews that their initial understanding outside of the use of online platforms of digital citizenship was limited and focused primarily on responsibility through internet safety and ethical behaviour. After reflecting on their preparedness, it became clear that their understanding of digital citizenship was initially limited. However, the practical implementation of the u.b.do program (NSW Department of Education, 2019b) in the classroom provided new insights. Classroom observations revealed how both teachers and students engaged with these concepts through drama pedagogy, with noticeable shifts occurring during the lessons.

When I introduced the research to the participant teachers, they approached the challenge with anticipation and apprehension. All four expressed concerns about their preparedness to

⁴¹ A footnote is provided the first time each code appears to support the reader. Codes refer to data sources and thematic categories. For example, Interview (I), Focus Group (FG), or Observation (O). GFDC refers to the theme General Focus on Digital Citizenship. The identification and explanation of these themes are discussed in the Methodology chapter, and the full list is available in **Appendix 5d**, Table 10.9.

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effectively teach the u.b.do program (NSW Department of Education, 2019b), which combined digital citizenship education into their classroom drama lessons. This concern was evident in classroom observations and interview responses. While all four teachers consistently emphasised their confidence in teaching drama and responsible online behaviours (RUT)⁴² separately, they felt unprepared and unsure how to integrate these topics deeply to align with the NSW drama syllabus.

Mrs Thomas reflected on her initial resistance and the student's lack of enthusiasm when she proposed the research idea to her students. I noted her apprehension when she described asking the students to participate in the study. She explained that previous attempts to explore the topic at school had failed to engage or excite the students, stating, "Initially, digital citizenship was met with a lot of resistance. There was a lack of enthusiasm among students." (I-GFDC). Mrs Thomas continued to describe how she considered the students to be exhausted and sceptical regarding the topic of digital citizenship:

They [the students]⁴³ rolled their eyes because I think the word digital citizenship has been drilled into them. In their high school experience, we would cover things like cyberbullying and digital citizenship. So, at the time, the students perceived that ethics was an overdone subject because they knew what it was like. They thought that it would be about introducing the concept of drama by doing a lot of roleplaying on bullying. Stereotypically cliched performances on digital citizenship, and I think they were worried. (I-GFDC)

At Montawl High School, Mr Simon expressed his concerns about addressing the topic in drama, acknowledging the unit's potential but noting his lack of sufficient knowledge and preparation time to deliver it successfully. "I always thought it was going to be a good unit to

⁴² RUT refers to the theme Responsible Use of Technology and Digital Platforms.

⁴³ Square brackets appearing in quotes indicates I have made additions to enhance the grammatical correctness and clarity of the phrases.

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begin with”, he noted, “but I think for me, going into this in the future, I was probably a little bit unprepared for the unit.” (I-GFDC, CL)⁴⁴

Mr Simon reflected on his phrasing of unpreparedness and drew connections to the school's prior digital citizenship policies, procedures, and strategies. He paused in serious thought, showing disappointment as he outlined how the focus before the research was always on safety and dangers:

When teaching digital citizenship, the focus was on bullying and cyberbullying. I think that is one of the things that I would probably transform in the future because I think sometimes teachers get stuck in the same ruts, where we are so focused on digital safety. I think teachers, myself included, get stuck in the dangers (I-GFDC).

While safety and dangers are key considerations, focusing too much on these aspects could limit the scope of digital citizenship education to defensive strategies rather than fostering a proactive, critical engagement with digital platforms. The u.b.do program (NSW Department of Education, 2019b) introduced a new approach unfamiliar to teachers and students, requiring them to develop their understanding of digital citizenship together. This collaborative learning process aimed to empower teachers as both educators and learners, equipping them with the pedagogical tools needed to guide students in critically engaging with their roles and responsibilities on digital platforms. Through the professional development and experiential nature of the u.b.do program (2019b), teachers were able to transform their limited understanding of digital citizenship into a more dynamic and interactive approach to teaching it. The participatory nature of the program allowed teachers to explore the potential of drama pedagogy, moving beyond initial concerns and embracing a more reflective and student-centred approach. The empowerment of teachers in this context

⁴⁴ I indicates data drawn from teacher interviews. GFDC refers to the theme General Focus on Digital Citizenship and CL refers to the theme Continuous Learning.

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means they were encouraged to embrace their evolving role as co-learners alongside their students, thereby fostering a more profound, shared understanding of digital citizenship.

The u.b.do program (NSW Department of Education, 2019b) challenged teachers to develop their understanding of digital citizenship alongside the students. It was written to empower and equip teachers like Mr Simon and Mrs Thomas with pedagogical tools, enabling them to guide students in critically engaging with their roles and responsibilities on digital platforms. Evidence from classroom observations and teacher feedback indicates that this empowerment was realised, as teachers began to demonstrate increased confidence and adaptability in facilitating discussions on digital citizenship. This approach fosters reflective thinking among students about their actions as digital citizens, providing a supportive environment that also helps to alleviate teacher anxieties. The observed reduction in teacher concerns was linked to the program's emphasis on ongoing professional learning through participatory and reflective teaching practices. Such practices involve both teachers and students in the learning process, encouraging a collaborative educational environment. Neelands and Goode (2000) refer to this as reflective practice, which promotes creating an educational environment where teachers and students collaboratively explore and understand complex social themes. This process is essential for effective digital citizenship education, as it mirrors the collaborative nature of online, offline or blended digital interactions. By engaging in reflective practice, students learn to navigate digital spaces thoughtfully and responsibly, while teachers become more confident in guiding these discussions.

Initially, while all teachers were familiar with the term 'digital citizenship,' their understanding was somewhat rudimentary. Before the unit, they had not integrated the principles of digital citizenship into their teaching practices or personal lives. Reflecting on her initial understanding at the beginning of the research, Mrs Thomas shared her limited knowledge and definition of digital citizenship and its concepts:

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I have never heard of digital tattoos before, and I like that more than my digital footprint... It's about their real-world personality and the blend between the two of them... My belief what I heard of digital citizenship, it was who you are online. I literally just thought digital citizenship was like who I am on Facebook and who on Instagram. (I-GFDC)

Mrs Elsa and Ms Skye also recognised their limited understanding of digital citizenship. They both admitted a need for adapting and embracing a more comprehensive approach. Ms Skye attributed her knowledge of digital citizenship to her experience in witnessing cyberbullying incidents between students in the online space, saying:

I do not have Snapchat, and I am not into all of that ...particularly because we have welfare cases that will be referred to teachers about things that have happened to them [the students] online. These situations have opened my eyes to, you know, what it means to be a better digital citizen and how I could use that influence or knowledge to help those students see that as well. (I-GFDC)

Mrs Elsa explained during her interview that she had incorporated components of digital citizenship into her drama classes before this research through isolated assignment topics. To unpack what I have coded as her general approach, her students created protocols in this task based on filmmaking, aiming to increase their understanding of concepts such as etiquette, security, and responsibility when filming with digital technology. The students applied digital citizenship principles in practical, real-world scenarios when doing the assignment; however, no further lessons revisited these principles. This meant that while the students had considered some concepts, they were not deeply ingrained in their ongoing learning. She explained,

I have taught film units where students were involved in filmmaking. They [the students] learned about ownership of the content, and they developed the protocols around filmmaking with each other (I-RUT). I guess that is digital citizenship, and so I

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have already been doing it, but I never knew how to focus on it as one ongoing topic.

(I-GFDC)

Even with some experience in teaching digital citizenship concepts, Mrs Elsa still acknowledged her early challenges, explaining, "Well, early on I was a little bit lost, and I actually did have to prepare... then I eased back and said, I can find my style (I-CL)."

Her feelings of unpreparedness likely resulted partly from the difference between using a topic in an assignment and implementing it through pedagogy. The depth and breadth of the learning experience vary between the approaches. A topic used in a summative assignment can be explored in an isolated and specific context, focusing on completing a task or solving a problem (QLD Department of Education, 2022). However, implementing a topic through pedagogy and aligning it with the syllabus makes it a part of the broader learning experience. It is about understanding the topic more deeply and comprehensively, leading to a better understanding and long-term retention (Gardner & Davis, 2013; O'Toole et al., 2009; Papert, 1987).

Ms Skye continued to express her concerns regarding her lack of technological proficiency and confidence, noting her apprehension about how these limitations might affect her throughout the unit. "Being old school and not very computer literate, I was aware of situations that happened online... It has definitely opened my eyes to what it means to be a better digital citizen (I-GFDC)".

Due to Ms Skye and Mrs Elsa's confidence in the research topic, both teachers had to independently undertake forms of professional development, recognising their need to deepen their understanding of digital citizenship. They proactively dedicated time to studying and researching the subject online to better support their students' learning.

All four teachers' initial understanding, definition and experience of digital citizenship focused on protecting personal information, avoiding cyberbullying, and understanding the implications of their digital footprint. As the teachers continued with the u.b.do program

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(NSW Department of Education, 2019b), they explored how drama pedagogy could transform this narrow understanding of digital citizenship. O'Connor and Freebody (2021) explain that drama pedagogy creates space for participants to critically engage with the complexities of citizenship, moving beyond simplistic or defensive understandings. Through various drama techniques, the students and teachers began to explore the historical and cultural narratives that shape their identities and responsibilities within a bicultural context. Techniques like Invisible Theatre helped shift the focus from passive reactions to online risks toward a proactive, ethical engagement with digital responsibilities, aligning with the teachers' evolving understanding.

Previously, they had taken steps that would address issues like preventing negative online behaviours, such as sharing inappropriate content or engaging in harmful communications, rather than exploring digital citizenship's more constructive themes, such as fostering ethical decision-making and understanding digital citizenship responsibilities. The emphasis remained on equipping students with the knowledge to navigate online spaces safely and responsibly while adhering to basic norms of digital etiquette and privacy management. Each teacher began with a general understanding centred around responsible technology use. This limited readiness highlighted a common theme: the teachers equated digital citizenship primarily with responsible technology use, something they felt most prepared to handle at the beginning of the research. However, after being introduced to the u.b.do unit (NSW Department of Education, 2019b), they recognised the need to expand their understanding to integrate these principles into their drama teaching more effectively. This laid the groundwork for the teachers to develop a deeper understanding as they progressed through the unit, ultimately enhancing their capability to foster a responsible and ethical digital environment in their classrooms.

4.2 Initial Observations

During the early classroom observations on drama pedagogy implementation, introducing the u.b.do unit marked a noteworthy change in the drama classroom at all four schools, with similar results to studies where students saw citizenship as active participation and social responsibility (Reichert, 2016). Initially, the theme of 'Adequately Engaging' (AE)⁴⁵ was pivotal in capturing the interactions between students and teachers as they began to navigate the complex concepts of the digital citizenship program. The unit overview was to "develop knowledge, skills, and an understanding of playbuilding through structured scenarios of online situations as proactive digital citizens" (NSW Department of Education, 2019b), and it set the foundations for exploring digital citizenship through drama. By focusing on 'exploring through doing', students were adequately engaged in theoretical learning about digital citizenship from the outset.

The first few lessons of any teaching and learning program are crucial in setting the scene, sparking student interest, and encouraging engagement. Martin, Gezer, and Wang (2019) identify effective engagement strategies for cultivating learning environments. Such strategies are vital for promoting students' understanding and practice of digital citizenship, bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. During the observations for the introductory classes, I noted that students' initial reactions varied from caution and curiosity at all four schools, with the first lesson beginning with an Invisible Theatre performance. This approach immediately captured the students' attention and facilitated deep reflections on their online behaviours. It also established a foundation for sustained engagement and critical inquiry throughout the unit, aligning with Martin et al.'s (2019) findings on active engagement in digital citizenship education.

Ms Skye at Lupaw High School effectively employed Boal's Invisible Theatre (BT)⁴⁶ from the *Theatre of the Oppressed* (Boal, 1979), a technique employed across all sites to spark

⁴⁵ AE refers to the theme Adequately Engaging.

⁴⁶ BT refers to the theme Boal Theatre.

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interest and engage students from the first lesson. Boal (1979) emphasises the power of Invisible Theatre in creating unexpected, disruptive moments that force reflection on social issues, a method Neelands (2009) highlights as effective in engaging students deeply in critical reflection on both social and digital contexts. As soon as the bell rang, students settled into what appeared to be a typical class. Ms Skye began by taking the roll, but the atmosphere quickly shifted from calm and rehearsed to upbeat and tense. While she was asking students to be seated and prepared for the lesson, two previously briefed student actors started a heated argument over an issue related to online privacy. This unexpected fight seemed spontaneous to the audience/classmates and mirrored scenarios they had encountered online, effectively blurring the lines between performance and reality.

This use of Invisible Theatre was a powerful engagement strategy and a pivotal moment for Ms Skye's professional growth. Beyond the immediate impact on students, drama pedagogy also facilitated teacher reflection. Initially uncertain about how to include digital citizenship concepts in her teaching, Ms Skye's successful implementation of this technique demonstrated her growing confidence and adaptability. Gazi's (2016) findings on experiential learning through drama support teacher growth and deepen understanding of complex topics such as digital citizenship. The impact on students was equally impressive; by immersing them in a scene that blurred the lines between reality and performance, Ms Skye prompted them to reflect on and confront the complexities of their online behaviours. Students' participation in this activity actively engaged them in digital citizenship, encouraging them to explore their roles and responsibilities through hands-on exploration, aligning with constructionist learning (Papert, 1987). This experiential approach reinforced the objectives of the u.b.do program (NSW Department of Education, 2019b), fostering critical thinking and responsible digital engagement among students while empowering teachers to embrace and innovate within their pedagogical practices.

In this scenario, the Invisible Theatre method involved students in spontaneous but strategically planned interactions that immersed them unknowingly in a performance,

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bridging the gap between the audience and performer. As the argument escalated in the performance, other classmates began to chime in with their opinions, emotively engaged, not realising that by doing so, they were participating in the Invisible Theatre performance. This method captured the students' attention and was a critical teaching moment for Ms Skye.

By facilitating this performance, Ms Skye was able to prompt deep reflection on online behaviours and digital citizenship, challenging students to consider their actions and reactions in digital spaces. This exercise illustrates the potential of drama pedagogy in fostering a more profound understanding of digital citizenship. It highlights Ms Skye's evolving role as both a facilitator of learning and a co-learner with her students as she navigated this innovative approach alongside them.

To try and diffuse the emotion of the argument in the performance, Ms Skye gently steered the discussion towards a deeper analysis of digital identities and personal responsibilities in online spaces. Once she revealed that it was a performance and not a real-life argument, the classroom atmosphere lightened, with students expressing relief through laughter. All were happy that the conflict was "not real" and amused by the realisation. Ms Skye seized the moment to explore Invisible Theatre further, prompting discussions on how theatre can infiltrate everyday life to provoke thought and dialogue. She questioned the students about Augusto Boal, asking, "Who has heard of Boal before? Anyone? Okay, who has heard of the term Invisible Theatre? Can you tell me what you think it might be? (O-BT)" which effectively piqued their curiosity and encouraged critical thinking.

Across all four participating schools, I observed similar Invisible Theatre (BT) performances addressing specific digital concerns relevant to the student's personal lives. These performances were more than just engaging activities; they were pivotal moments in student and teacher development. By introducing digital citizenship concepts through relatable and emotionally charged scenarios, teachers were able to make these abstract ideas tangible for students.

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For the teachers, these performances were instrumental in shifting their pedagogical approaches. Initially, many teachers felt unprepared to tackle the complexities of digital citizenship. However, through Invisible Theatre, they began to see the value of integrating these concepts into their lessons. The positive student reactions and the depth of discussions that followed these performances reinforced the value of this approach, encouraging teachers to continue exploring similar methods throughout the program.

These performances introduced various concepts of digital citizenship in ways that allowed students to connect them to their everyday experiences. At Madike High School, the storyline was about the repercussions of sharing stolen images. This highlighted the prevalent issue of understanding consent and respect in digital communications. Montawl High School addressed the theme of cyberbullying, engaging students in a scenario that unpacked the emotional and ethical complexities of online behaviour through inappropriate comments on a social media post. Tedrain High School's performance was about the misuse of personal information, illustrating the consequences of privacy violations in a digital context. The performances encouraged students to express these complexities in ways that went beyond verbal explanation. Communication was a tool for students to embody and explore ethical digital behaviors through roleplay and discussion, deepening their understanding of their online responsibilities (Jefferson & Anderson, 2017).

By touching on specific yet diverse issues, the students effectively engaged in the learning and considered the broader implications of their online behaviour. The strategic use of Invisible Theatre across these schools successfully induced discussions, encouraged empathy, and fostered a deeper understanding of digital citizenship, setting a solid foundation for exploring these themes throughout the u.b.do program (NSW Department of Education, 2019b) and shifting student engagement from curiosity to excitement.

After completing the Invisible Theatre exercise at Madike High School, Mrs Elsa facilitated roleplaying scenes to explore the concepts of online identities. She asked students to consider digital interactions and the broader implications of their online behaviour through

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guided questions such as, "How do the characters in your scene reflect different aspects of your identity?" (O-EPDC, SED)⁴⁷ Through critical thinking questioning, students could evaluate their online actions and consider how they might align with their values and identities. Observing these interactions, I noted a shift from participation to engagement, demonstrating an understanding of the material and a personal connection to the issues presented.

At Montawl High School, Mr Simon encouraged students to playbuild performances around appropriate online communication. Boal's (1979) *Theatre of the Oppressed* outlines the potential of roleplaying for allowing students to explore complex social issues and critically reflect on their behaviour and identity in both online and offline scenarios. Neelands (2009) further emphasises how roleplay helps students understand their social roles and responsibilities. Mr Simon discussed using social masks to help students consider different personas they may become in online and offline contexts. During this section of the lesson, students considered the authenticity of online expressions, outlined by one student sharing, "Sometimes, I feel like I'm more myself online, but other times, it's just another mask." (O-EU, SED, UE)⁴⁸ This honest comment sparked a deeper class discussion, where students unpacked the reasons behind their different online personas and interactions with others. The classroom atmosphere became vulnerable, thoughtful, and engaged as students began considering the practical implications of their online personas and the potential consequences of various digital interactions.

After the Invisible Theatre performance at Tedrain High School, Mrs Thomas drew parallels and made connections to prior learning she had taught the class on Political theatre. The students watched a scene containing issues surrounding online behaviour and privacy management, mirroring political theatre's provocative and socially conscious nature. This

⁴⁷ O indicates data drawn from classroom observations. EPDC refers to the theme Expansion of Perspectives on Digital Citizenship, and SED refers to Self-Expression and Discovery.

⁴⁸ O indicates data drawn from classroom observations. EU refers to the theme Empathy and Understanding, SED refers to Self-Expression and Discovery, and UE refers to Understanding Emotions.

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learning experience prompted students to consider the ethical implications of digital interactions, such as the unsolicited sharing of photos. It served as a tangible demonstration of digital citizenship themes within a dramatic context, bridging the gap between the abstract concept and its real-world application.

In one lesson at each school, teachers used drama pedagogy to teach concepts of identity, privacy management, digital interactions, and cyber hygiene in a dynamic learning environment where students actively engaged and reflected on their roles as digital citizens. These lessons demonstrated how drama pedagogy can effectively engage students with complex digital citizenship concepts. By using relatable and emotionally charged scenarios, the teachers helped their students reflect on their roles as digital citizens and understand their responsibilities online. My observations lay the foundation for understanding how drama pedagogy enhanced students' awareness of their digital actions. As students made connections between their online behaviour and real-world interactions, they engaged more critically with digital citizenship. As the program progressed, this set the groundwork for a deeper exploration of digital citizenship. It was an essential step in setting the tone for how digital citizenship would be explored, with teachers observing and adapting their strategies to ensure the engagement was sustained and meaningful for the students.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed how I introduced drama pedagogy to teach digital citizenship, focusing on teacher preparedness, initial reactions from teachers and students, and early classroom observations. The findings highlighted drama-based approaches' initial challenges and successes to enhance students' understanding of digital citizenship. Teachers started with a limited understanding of digital citizenship, primarily focused on responsible technology use. However, through the u.b.do program (NSW Department of Education, 2019b), they developed a more profound understanding of fostering responsible and ethical digital engagement alongside their students. This progression showed how

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iterative and reflective teaching practices enhance educators' understanding and implementation of complex concepts (Neelands & Goode, 2000).

These findings align with broader research on how drama pedagogy fosters empathy, ethical decision-making, and social responsibility (Boal, 1979; Neelands, 2009; O'Connor & Freebody, 2022). The shift from a narrow focus on safety to a more comprehensive engagement with digital responsibilities also reflects a growing trend in digital citizenship education (Reichert, 2016). This suggests that drama-based approaches may offer valuable insights into digital citizenship education, as demonstrated by the schools researched, with potential implications in other NSW schools. For example, Mrs Elsa's initial feeling of being "a little bit lost" at the start of the unit evolved into confidence as she guided her students through complex digital citizenship topics. As the teachers gained confidence in their approach, students responded with increased engagement, reflecting the program's success in fostering engagement in the topic through drama. This connection between teacher confidence and student outcomes highlights the effectiveness of iterative and reflective practices in reshaping classroom dynamics and student learning.

The next chapter will investigate the impact of drama pedagogy on students, focusing on changes in behaviour and perceptions. I will explore how students interacted with the digital citizenship concepts introduced through drama and how their understanding and actions evolved throughout the program.

5 Initial shifts in Student Perceptions and Behaviours

The previous chapter examined students' and teachers' initial reactions and understandings of digital citizenship. This chapter addresses the research question: 'How can drama pedagogy impact a student's understanding of citizenship in a human-centred online world?' This question is closely related to understanding the dynamics within the classroom, which is why the chapter also considers the question: 'How do teachers and students interact within the classroom environment when experiencing and participating in online drama pedagogy?' These interactions are crucial because they shape how students change their interactions with others in the blended human-centred and online world and influence how they reflect upon triggers, techniques, or strategies that may affect their wellbeing negatively or positively through drama pedagogy. Together, answering these questions provides an understanding of how drama pedagogy shapes students' perceptions and behaviours in the context of digital citizenship.

This chapter outlines the progression of students' attitudes, engagement, and actions towards digital citizenship as the teaching and learning program unfolded. In the first few weeks, students began to shift their perceptions of digital citizenship, moving from passive observers to active participants in discussions around ethics and online behaviours. Their early reflections demonstrate increased curiosity (Jefferson & Anderson, 2021) and openness to exploring digital interactions through drama activities. These findings, drawn from student focus groups, interviews, and observations, are analysed to explore how students understand and perceive interactions in the human-centred world. The analysis reveals key themes, including increased engagement, deeper participation, and the growing development of empathy and ethical understanding. As Freebody (2022) discusses, drama pedagogy provides students with a space to engage with social justice issues, develop empathy, and reflect on ethical considerations in a safe, creative space. This perspective supports the students' increased engagement in digital citizenship topics, as they shift from

passive observers to critically reflecting on their behaviours and interactions in the blended world.

5.1 Emerging Behavioural and Perceptual Changes

During my observations in Week 3 at Montawl High School, I witnessed numerous moments of progression in students' understanding and engagement when they participated in Boal's drama methods. One particular lesson stood out, demonstrating a noticeable shift in the students' engagement and understanding of digital citizenship. This lesson revealed changes in how students approached conflict resolution, their ability to assess media representations critically, and their awareness of the ethical implications of online interactions. Howe (2019) highlights that contradictions in social realities, such as those explored through *Theatre of the Oppressed* (Boal, 1979), are key to understanding why individuals may feel disempowered while simultaneously desiring change. By confronting these contradictions, students were able to reflect more deeply on their own digital interactions and the power dynamics within online spaces. Using newspaper headlines to explore conflict and bullying, students moved beyond surface-level engagement, demonstrating deeper reflection on their roles as digital citizens.

The lesson started with Mr Simon introducing Boal's game 'Newspaper Headlines' (BT), where students create dramatic representations of conflict through tableaux. This exercise was designed to help students critically understand and analyse the progression of conflicts they may encounter online by allowing them to physically and visually represent each stage of conflict. Through embodying different phases of conflict escalation, students were encouraged to reflect on the causes and consequences of the confrontations through the use of multimodal communication (Jefferson & Anderson, 2017). Within twenty minutes, students created three tableaux, each representing a different level of conflict. Mr Simon then explained the stages of escalation: latent, where conditions for conflict or bullying exist but are not yet consciously recognised; emerging, when participants begin to actively

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engage with the conflict; and manifest, where the conflict is fully evident to all and is deliberately escalated (NSW Department of Education, 2019b).

As I moved between the groups, distinct differences in their approaches became apparent. In SGroup1, students sat casually on drama blocks, directed and led primarily by one student, and engaged in discussions about 'doing' the work. This contrasted immensely with SGroup2, where four students actively engaged in physical movement and engagement in the centre of the drama space. There was a noticeable increase in physical movement in SGroup1 after Mr Simon clarified the instructions and addressed a student's confusion about tableaux, although playbuilding continued vocally. This active participation likely enhanced their understanding and retention and provided a safe space for students to explore and discuss complex issues crucial for understanding socially constructed realities (Creswell & Miller, 2000). This environment allowed students to engage more openly and thoughtfully with the material, fostering deeper insights and reflections.

Each group used their freeze frames as starting points to improvise scenes, adding dialogue and movement to portray latent, emerging, and manifest oppression. This approach helped students visualise and understand the different stages of conflict, giving them a nuanced understanding of how conflicts develop and escalate. Ten minutes later, Mr Simon joined a scene in a teacher-in-role capacity. This intervention elicited laughter and reinvigorated enthusiasm among the students. The humour and enthusiasm made the learning experience more enjoyable and memorable, reducing stress and creating a positive learning environment. Each scene starts and ends in a tableau, with Mr Simon acting as the Joker, contributing further thinking prompts related to the details about the characters, time, and place to improve the work before the class performed it. His guidance ensured that students addressed and understood key learning points, embodying the role of the Joker in facilitating effective learning.

Another ten minutes later, it was time for the students to perform for the class. This phase was key as it allowed students to perform, reflect, and discuss their learnings. The class

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performed the three tableaux twice. The first time, it was performed straight through so the audience could become familiar with the plot, characters, and issues. After the first performance, Mr Simon asked the audience to comment on the cause of the oppression, how they could address it, and whether there was more than one way to handle it. This reflection phase helped deepen the student's understanding and perspective-taking.

During the second performance, the audience could shout 'STOP' and intervene, taking on the role of any character in the play to try to modify or de-escalate the conflict. Transforming the newspaper headline into Forum Theatre allowed students to experiment with different solutions and see the impact of their actions, fostering empathy and perspective-taking by allowing them to see the world from different viewpoints.

The lesson concluded with a reflective teacher-led discussion where students unpacked the aspects of Boal's approach to provoke discussion and prompt change. When a particular student was reflecting on the journey she and her character took, she stated, "It's hard to know who to trust and who not to trust online" (O-EU, EPDC)⁴⁹. This reflection highlighted how drama pedagogy can bring complex issues like trust in digital spaces to the surface for students, encouraging them to explore these challenges through creative problem-solving. For instance, I observed one group exploring the theme of trust in online interactions by creating a scenario in which a character unknowingly spreads misinformation after receiving a message from what appears to be a trusted friend (O-SED). As the scenario unfolded, the students portrayed the increasing tension as other characters began to question the information's validity and the original source's trustworthiness (O-SED, RUT, C)⁵⁰.

Students within the group then performed again, with one taking on the role of the deceiver, who intentionally manipulated trust to spread false information, and another as the deceived,

⁴⁹ O indicates data drawn from classroom observations. EU refers to the theme Empathy and Understanding, and EPDC refers to the theme Expansion of Perspectives on Digital Citizenship.

⁵⁰ O indicates data drawn from class observations. SED refers to the theme Self-Expression and Discovery, RUT refers to Responsible Use of Technology and Digital Platforms, and C refers to Collaboration.

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who struggled with the consequences of acting on unreliable information (O-C, PSS)⁵¹.

Gursel-Bilgin (2022) notes how the *Theatre of the Oppressed* (Boal, 1979) fosters critical dialogue, allowing participants to engage deeply with issues like social trust and inequality. This aligns with how the students in this lesson critically examined trust in digital spaces. Through this exercise, students critically examined the complexities of online interactions, recognising the need to verify information and the potential consequences of misplaced trust in digital relationships. As they faced the challenge of portraying complex emotional and social dynamics in real-time, they tapped into their creative imagination and collaboratively developed strategies to convey and resolve the progression of conflict. This process fostered a deeper, more critical engagement with digital citizenship concepts.

As Mr Simon facilitated the exercise the students actively engaged in taking on diverse perspectives within the conflict through the critical roles of teamwork and collaboration (Jefferson & Anderson, 2021). These collaborative learning experiences supported deeper understanding as students participated in joint meaning-making, developed essential social skills, and critically reflected on their actions and interactions. *The Learning Disposition Wheel* articulated by Jefferson and Anderson (2021) emphasises the development of cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal dispositions, including teamwork, communication, and empathy. By participating in structured drama activities, students co-construct solutions, collaborate, and reflect on trust and responsibility in both online and offline contexts. This reflective collaboration helps students practise and internalise essential skills, such as navigating complex social relationships in a digital world.

The students' evolving behaviours and personal insights demonstrated the potential of drama pedagogy to create meaningful, impactful, lasting learning experiences. The following section will outline the specific shifts in behaviour and mindset that students experienced as they engaged more deeply with the teaching and learning program.

⁵¹ O indicates data drawn from classroom observations. C refers to the theme Collaboration, and PSS refers to Problem-Solving Skills.

5.2 Developing Ethical Awareness and Self-Expression

Through drama pedagogy, students developed a heightened awareness of ethical responsibilities online. They expressed empathy more openly and began to internalise the ethical implications of their online behaviours, moving beyond simple understanding to actively considering the consequences of their digital actions. Analysing my observation notes of this lesson, theme 8 became obvious: empathy and understanding, confirming that drama pedagogy played a role in fostering students' development of empathy and understanding.

During focus group discussions at Montawl High School, a few students also recalled this lesson as a pivotal moment in their understanding of digital citizenship, particularly in how online interactions require careful negotiation, perspective-taking, and ethical decision-making. One student recalled how the exercise of stepping in and resolving conflict in different ways helped them see the complexity of digital interactions and the role of empathy in navigating these spaces. She explained, "It was very interesting to see everyone stepping in and trying to resolve a conflict in a different way" (FG-EU). Another student added that the activities made them more aware of how different perspectives could influence how conflicts are resolved online, stating that the tapping-in and out exercises provided multiple ways of handling difficult situations (FG-EU). The hands-on, dynamic approach promoted empathy and ethical understanding and encouraged collaboration and community engagement, allowing students to express their thoughts freely and engage meaningfully with others (Jefferson & Anderson, 2017). As students engage in the roleplaying and conflict resolution exercises, they are provided with a safe space to explore social justice issues and reflect on the ethical implications of their actions in digital environments (Sutton et al., 2024). This collaborative process enhances their understanding of digital citizenship and the complexities of online interactions.

Another student also reflected on her enhanced empathy and understanding, explaining how she could better comprehend the consequences of her actions and interactions. This

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improvement fostered a more thoughtful and empathetic approach to digital citizenship. "These exercises have definitely been more successful in instilling in us what being a digital citizen means... it's a more creative way that allows us to think deeply about our actions " (FG-EU). This unit had bridged the gap between digital citizenship concepts by playbuilding real-world scenarios, making the learning more personally relevant and meaningful for students.

These initial experiences with drama pedagogy not only had engaged the students but also began to shift their perceptions and mindset toward a more reflective and responsible approach to their online presence. The transformative potential of these activities was clear as students moved from passive learners to active participants, critically examining their roles as digital citizens. For example, one student from the Lupaw High School focus group described how the drama activities made them more empathetic and aware of real-world issues they might otherwise scroll past online, like the Ukraine war, explaining that they now view these situations as more than just online news, but as real people's experiences (FG-EU). Another student from Tedrain High School shared that drama gave them the confidence to actively stand up for others online, stating that they now leave positive comments when they see someone being bullied (FG-EU).

Reflecting on these comments, I noted how the hands-on, dynamic approach of drama was helping students internalise the concepts of digital citizenship. Noting these early shifts from passive learners to active participants revealed how students were beginning to engage critically with their online roles, demonstrating a deeper understanding of the consequences of their digital actions. This transition was particularly evident as students moved beyond surface-level responses to more reflective discussions, considering not just their own experiences but also the perspectives of others. Cultivating empathy and understanding sets a solid foundation for further exploration into the more personal areas of self-expression and emotional discovery. Through the participants' verbatim responses, students began to

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articulate how the drama pedagogy fostered a sense of empathy among them and encouraged them to express their feelings and experiences.

The Boalian methods allowed the students to explore emerging concepts within a blended world where online and offline interactions coexist simultaneously. Participants started to recognise how human connections shape communication and influence online interactions. Through the human-centred approach to learning, I observed and heard students articulating a heightened awareness of empathy and understanding in the focus groups and observations. These themes are central for fostering healthier and more respectful online and offline exchanges, enhancing their interactions in digital and physical environments, and aiding in developing well-rounded digital citizens.

Evidence from interviews and focus groups supports the value of these qualities, demonstrating how prioritising human-centric interactions cultivates a community of students who are more empathetic and understanding as they navigate an evolving and complex blended world. Participants in the Montawl High School and Tedrain High School focus groups acknowledged that the drama process changed the way they interacted with each other by influencing their empathy and understanding.

At Montawl High School, students outlined new insights into digital citizenship when reflecting on various situations in their drama class. They began to identify how drama's critical and creative thinking processes encouraged them to collaborate and reflect upon their behaviours in digital spaces, fostering a heightened sense of self-awareness and responsibility. Emma, explained:

These exercises have been successful in instilling in us what being a digital citizen means, unlike if we were just presented with information that is hard to absorb. With Drama, we got to analyse different situations. It is a more creative way that allows us to think deeply about our actions and relate them to being a digital citizen. I think the exercises and the whole topic we have done have really helped in just identifying the

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different areas where we should practice digital citizenship. It has made me personally more aware of what I am, what I am doing, and who I am when I am online. (FG-EU)

Emma's reflection presents a shift from absorbing information to becoming more self-aware and conscious of her online behaviour. She recognises digital citizenship principles and acknowledges how she has started reflecting on her actions online, demonstrating a behavioural change prompted by the drama exercises. Aligning with Boal's (1979) concept of the spect-actor, Emma's experience shows how drama can enable participants to move from passive spectatorship to active engagement. She was no longer just absorbing information but actively reflecting on her role in digital spaces. The drama exercises allowed her to embody the principles of digital citizenship, encouraging her to think critically about her actions and the impact they have on others in online environments.

Bianca echoed this sentiment, comparing the hands-on experience in Drama to practical experiments in science: "It is easy to become apathetic when someone is talking to you. I guess it is why we do practical experiments in science instead of just learning about the gravity constant. I remember the gravity constant because we tested it out in class. The same thing applies here when you go into situations and try them out for yourself; they remain ingrained in your memory" (FG-EU). Although Bianca confused the gravitational constant with gravitational acceleration, a common science experiment, her point remains valid. She emphasises how experiential learning in Drama, like hands-on experiments in science, enables deeper, long-lasting engagement with the material. Her comment outlines Drama's role in providing an active, embodied learning experience that enhances memory retention and fosters deeper understanding. While her statement demonstrates the efficacy of Drama in making lessons memorable, it also suggests a shift from passive learning to active application of digital citizenship concepts. The students retained the key ideas and applied them in their online interactions. This aligns with the idea that immersive and participatory experiences in drama can enhance students' empathy and ethical

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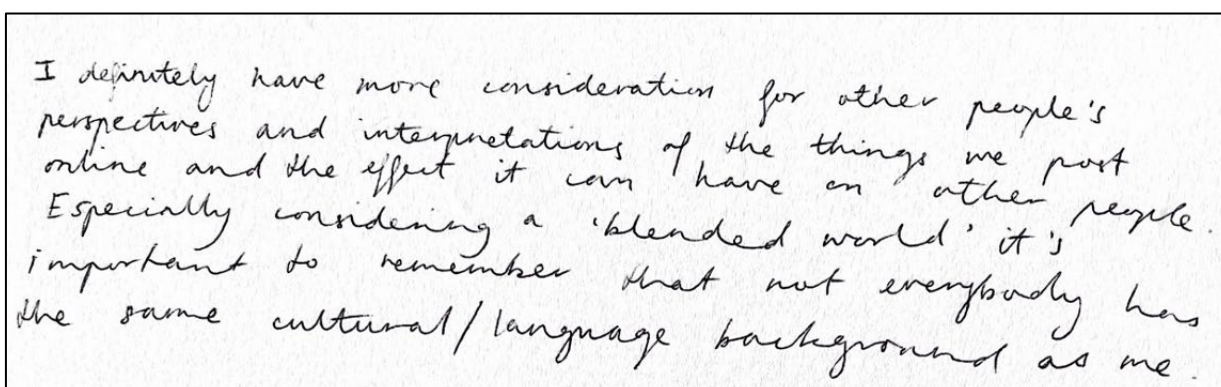
understanding, allowing them to navigate complex social interactions in digital spaces more effectively (Sutton et al., 2024).

I was encouraged when the students at Montawl High School and Tedrain High School also acknowledged the influence of drama pedagogy on their interactions, recognising its role in developing their empathy and understanding. For the final question of the focus group discussions, I asked the students to reflect on their experiences by writing a sentence, drawing an image, or sharing an idea that best describes their perspective on being a citizen in their blended world (online and human-centred) after completing the unit. This exercise allowed the students to reflect on their previous comments and gave me critical insights for analysis.

In the Montawl High School focus group, students anonymously shared their thoughts and reflections through images and written statements. These responses highlighted drama's capacity to deepen their understanding.

Figure 5.1

Student Reflection on Empathy and Understanding in a Blended World



I definitely have more consideration for other people's perspectives and interpretations of the things we post online and the effect it can have on other people. Especially considering a 'blended world' it's important to remember that not everybody has the same cultural/language background as me.

Note. This figure displays a student's handwritten reflection: "I definitely have more consideration for other people's perspectives and interpretations of the things we put online and the effect it can have on other people. Especially considering a 'blended world', it's important to remember that not everybody has the same cultural/language background as me" (FG-EU). The response demonstrates the student's developing empathy and

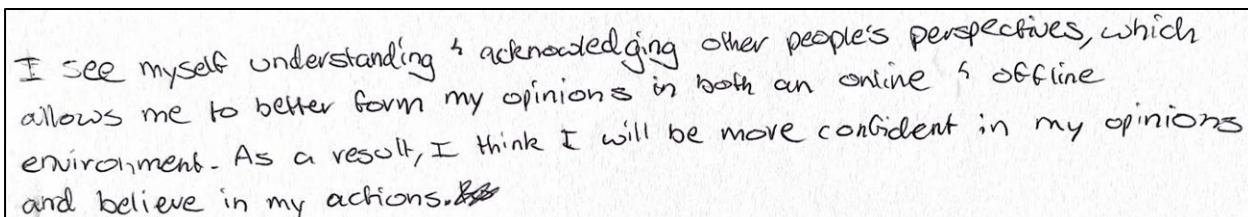
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intercultural awareness, highlighting how drama pedagogy supported a more inclusive understanding of digital interactions in a blended world.

The student's reflection reveals a shift in their behaviour, moving from passive digital engagement to a more intentional and empathetic approach online. Through drama, the student now recognises the need to consider others' cultural and linguistic differences, reflecting a deeper understanding of the broader impacts of her online actions.

Figure 5.2

Understanding Perspectives and Building Confidence in a Blended World

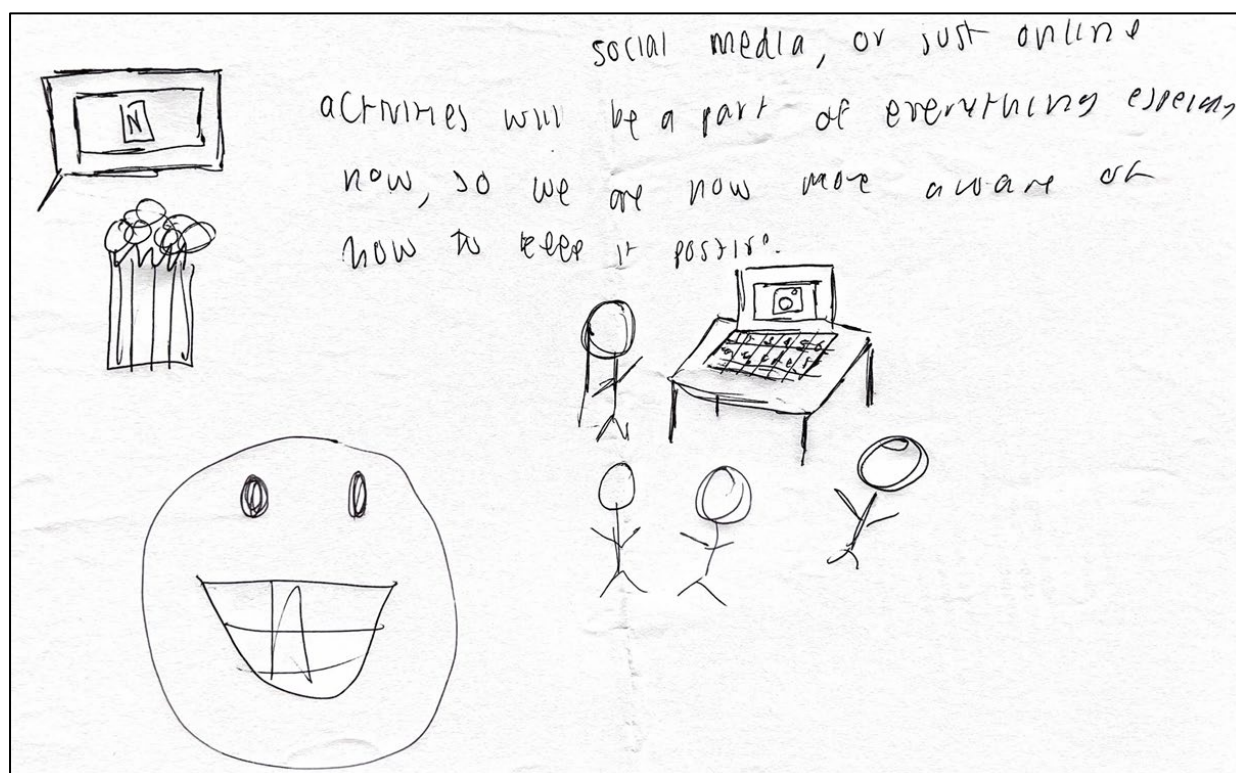


I see myself understanding & acknowledging other people's perspectives, which allows me to better form my opinions in both an online & offline environment. As a result, I think I will be more confident in my opinions and believe in my actions.

Continuing this theme, this figure reveals another student's thoughts: "I see myself understanding & acknowledging other people's perspectives, which allows me to better form my opinions in both an online & offline environment. As a result, I think I will be more confident in my opinions and believe in my actions." (FG-EU). This reflection indicates the growth in self-confidence and critical thinking skills, indicating that drama has enabled students to navigate human-centred interactions with greater assurance and empathy.

Figure 5.3

Student Drawing Representing Positive Engagement With Social Media

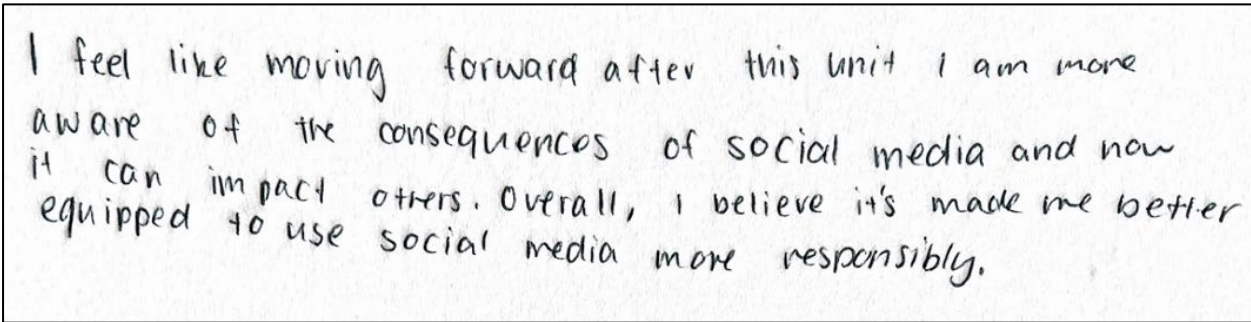


Note. This figure showcases a student's drawing created in response to a focus group question on social media. The student drew positive uses of social media: a screen with the Netflix logo and a popcorn container symbolising entertainment, a group of three students around a laptop led by a female teacher figure representing education, and the Instagram app icon on the screen. The keyboard displays 123456 and abcdef, possibly indicating early literacy/numeracy or a simplified depiction of a computer. A large smiling face symbolising "keeping it positive" complements these elements.

In this figure, the text reads: "Social media, or just online activities, will be a part of everything especially now, so we are now more aware of how to keep it positive." The student chose to draw their thoughts in response to the focus group question. This visual representation indicates the student's awareness of the role of online activities and their commitment to promoting a positive digital environment (FG-EU).

Figure 5.4

Recognising the Consequences of Social Media With Empathy and Responsibility

A rectangular box containing a handwritten note in black ink on a light-colored background. The text is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style. The content of the note is: "I feel like moving forward after this unit I am more aware of the consequences of social media and how it can impact others. Overall, I believe it's made me better equipped to use social media more responsibly." The note is enclosed in a thin black border.

I feel like moving forward after this unit I am more aware of the consequences of social media and how it can impact others. Overall, I believe it's made me better equipped to use social media more responsibly.

This figure features another student response from Montawl High School: "I feel like moving forward after this unit I am more aware of the consequences of social media and how it can impact others. Overall, I believe it's made me better equipped to use social media more responsibly" (FG-EU). This insight reflects the student's increased responsibility and awareness of the impact of their online actions, demonstrating the overall effectiveness of the drama unit in promoting responsible digital citizenship.

When analysing the drawings and written statements from Montawl High School focus group students, it was evident that the drama unit has played an essential role in shaping their understanding of digital citizenship. The students had an awareness of the presence of social media in their lives and a desire to commit to navigating these spaces with kindness and reflection. These responses reflected a shift in awareness and the student's decision to act thoughtfully, indicating their commitment to practising digital citizenship with compassion and conscientiousness. Stevenson (2010) argues that cultural citizenship must encompass active participation and mutual respect within a shared community, challenging traditional notions of citizenship that focus too narrowly on formal processes. The students' reflections align with this, as they recognised their responsibilities as digital citizens, both in their online interactions and offline behaviours. Through the drama teaching and learning program, they began to recognise how participation, respect, and responsibility contribute to digital and

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human-centred communities, embodying the principles of cultural citizenship Stevenson describes.

As the Tedrain High School focus group commenced, the concepts of empathy and understanding remained evident in the participants' responses. In this focus group, the students reflected on their development of empathy and understanding, particularly when discussing how active listening during drama class fostered improved empathy.

Figure 5.5

"Before and After": Visualising a Shift Toward Empathy

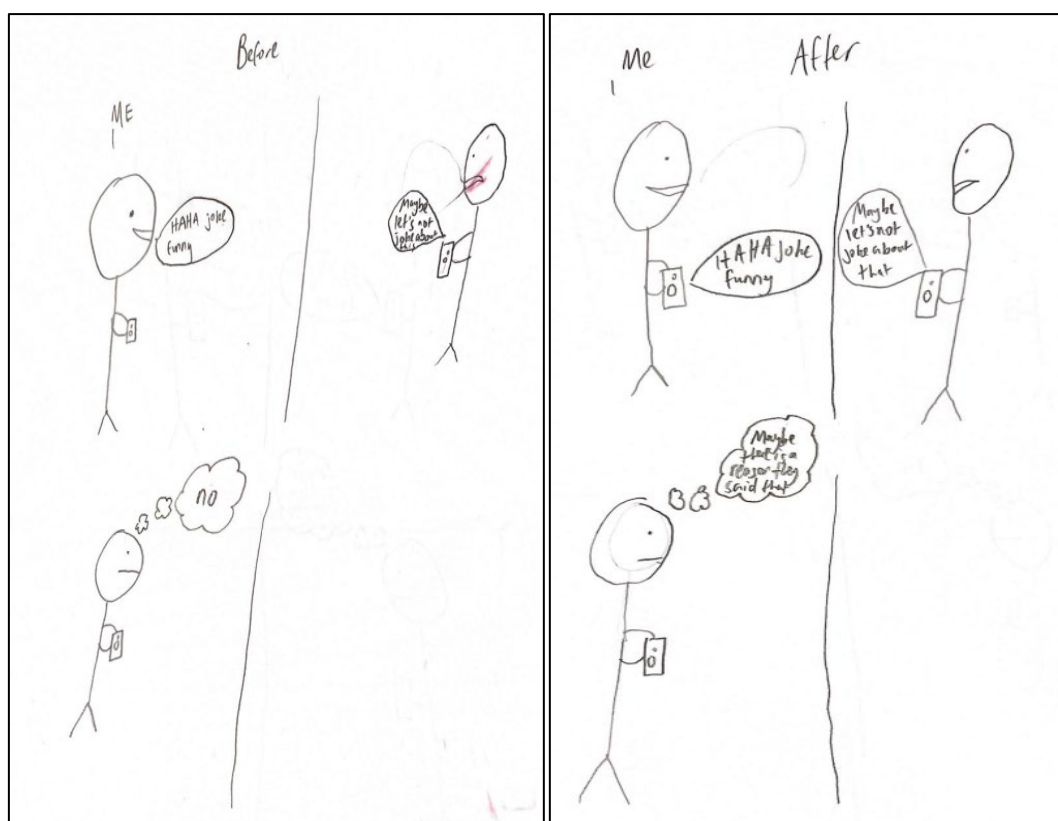


Figure 5.5 depicts a shift in a student's understanding after completing the unit. Before the unit, the student laughs at something and responds dismissively when called out. After the unit, the student considers that there might be a reason for the challenge, with the text saying, "Maybe it's not a joke to laugh about" and "Maybe there's a reason they said that" (FG-EU). This drawing captures the student's improved capacity for empathy and understanding. The "After" panel suggests a student's introspection and consideration of

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others' perspectives, indicating a deeper understanding of the impact of words and actions on others. The student's development from resistance to contemplation signifies a substantial step forward in their empathetic journey.

This newfound understanding and realisation of empathy through active listening emerged as a prominent theme during the discussion. The students began connecting their learning to current global issues, such as the conflict in Ukraine, indicating that the drama activities had instilled a deeper sensitivity and awareness of international concerns. Nia expressed that her perspective began to shift when she got to hear everyone's opinions and see different points of view on situations. She stated, "My views did change a lot because I got to hear everyone's opinions on things. I got to see different points of view on situations. That process enabled me to consider other perspectives a bit more" (FG-EU). This process enabled her to consider other perspectives more deeply, fostering a greater sense of empathy.

The drama activities allowed Daisy to put herself in others' shoes. She mentioned: "It is just being more empathetic and considering myself in the other person's shoes. For example, the whole Ukrainian situation, I think a lot of people look at that and just generalise it and think, oh my god, it is a war, whatever, I am just going to scroll past it, but I think paying attention to these issues and thinking, wow, this is happening, it is not just online, this is a real person experiencing real things. I now have a bit more of an online empathy" (FG-EU). Within this moment, Daisy revealed a heightened awareness considerate of the human aspect behind online stories, showing increased online empathy. This experience aligned with the *Learning Disposition Wheel's* emphasis on developing empathy as a central interpersonal disposition. According to Jefferson and Anderson (2021), empathy is not just about understanding others' feelings; it involves actively engaging with their experiences and perspectives, which is essential for fostering meaningful connections in both digital and real-world contexts. Daisy was able to practice and internalise her empathetic skills through drama, which are essential for understanding human experiences in a blended world. This growth in empathy

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equipped her to engage more thoughtfully with global issues, reinforcing the Wheel's assertion that empathy was integral to developing responsible and socially aware individuals, enabling them to navigate complex social interactions with sensitivity and awareness (Jefferson & Anderson, 2021).

Carly also highlighted the need for greater understanding and empathy towards situations people might joke about due to a lack of personal experience. She stated, "People tend to make jokes out of situations they do not understand. For example, none of us will be affected by the current thing in Ukraine because we live in a safe country. People are making memes out of this thing when they have never experienced it. We need to understand more about what people are going through. We need more empathy towards such situations" (FG-EU). Carly's reflection demonstrated how empathy can deepen students' understanding of the severity of global issues as human-centred citizens.

Nia further explained that drama made her more self-aware and attuned to others and the events happening around her that she wouldn't usually notice. Nia reflected, "I think not only does it make you self-aware, but it also makes you aware of others and everything that goes on around you that you would not usually notice. In drama, we must think about the setting and the audience. We are considering not just always about that one person's role but the whole scene. In real life and online, we do that all the time without even knowing" (FG-EU). Drama pedagogy fostered this type of awareness because of its creative nature and because students must consider both the internal world of the scene and the audience's perspective. Students are constantly shifting between different viewpoints by engaging with both what is happening in the drama and how the audience perceives it. This form of *metaxis*, discussed by Boal (1979), asked students to navigate multiple perspectives at once, extending this heightened awareness into their daily interactions. This reflects O'Toole's (2022) concept of 'pedagogy of enlightenment,' which suggests that drama pedagogy encourages empathy and critical reflection on one's role in the world. Nia's reflection on becoming more attuned to others and her surroundings indicates this shift, as

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does Carly's growing empathy toward global issues such as the Ukraine conflict. Drama fostered the students' ability to empathise with others and expanded their capacity for compassion beyond their immediate social circle.

Across three of the four schools, students reflected on global issues such as the conflict in the Middle-East, demonstrating how the drama activities encouraged them to empathise with people and situations far removed from their direct experiences. This recurring theme shows how the students began developing a more outward-looking view of the complexities and adversities present in the world. When I moved to Lupaw High School, I noted how those students took it a step further. They began to connect empathy to comprehending and articulating their emotions, sharing insights into the complexity of human emotions and noting the duality of human behaviour.

Jake at Lupaw High School was particularly passionate about this realisation, saying, "Some people are two-faced. You get one side when you are with them and then another when they are among others" (FG-UE). His insights during the focus group provided evidence that the drama process, particularly the exploration of character and role, allowed him to reflect on how we present different sides of ourselves depending on context. Jake's reflection captures Boal's (1979) concept of *metaxis* as he realised the experience of existing in two realities, with different online personas, modifying his behaviour depending on the context. By exploring character, Jake considered the personal traits and internal motivations of an individual, while his exploration of role helped him see how external circumstances and social dynamics influence how people behave in different settings. Through studying the two elements of drama and developing an understanding of *metaxis*, Jake was able to recognise the duality of human behaviour, processing how people might shift between different behaviours depending on the situation or group they are in.

This reflective process helped Jake understand his own duality and encouraged a deeper examination of societal expectations and how they shape behaviour in varying contexts. Just as Freebody (2022) and Howard (2004) outlined, drama fostered critical reflection and

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allows students like Jake to challenge norms, providing a space to question and redefine the social frameworks influencing his actions, both online and offline. In this way, drama empowered the students to engage with justice-oriented citizenship through the exploration of different perspectives and social roles.

Cora also explored the multifaceted nature of human interactions by discussing face-to-face and online interactions. She noted, "That is one of the great things about drama. We are learning about how people interact. We learn to read people, and we can adjust our personalities to different situations. We wear different masks in society. One can adjust one's personality and response differently" (FG- UE). Cora consciously recognised drama's role in how it taught her to respond to people and adapt to various social situations, drawing connections to class mask work and the 'masks' people wear in society, allowing us to adjust their personalities and reactions based on the context.

The ability to consider and begin to understand their emotions continued to appear in focus groups, returning to Tedrain High School. During the discussion, all students shared that observing dramatic representations of digital citizenship scenarios evoked many emotional responses and promoted individual reflection. Boal's methods, particularly the Spect-actor approach, allowed them to consider the complexity of emotions people navigate online, often hidden behind screens.

Daisy explicitly mentioned the impact of the Spect-actor method on her. When students step into roles, they are practising empathy and experiencing and recognising a range of emotions in themselves and the characters they portray. This process can help them identify and label emotions more accurately, understand their triggers, and explore how emotions can be expressed and managed. Daisy reflected, "The spectator thing influenced my emotions" (FG-UE).

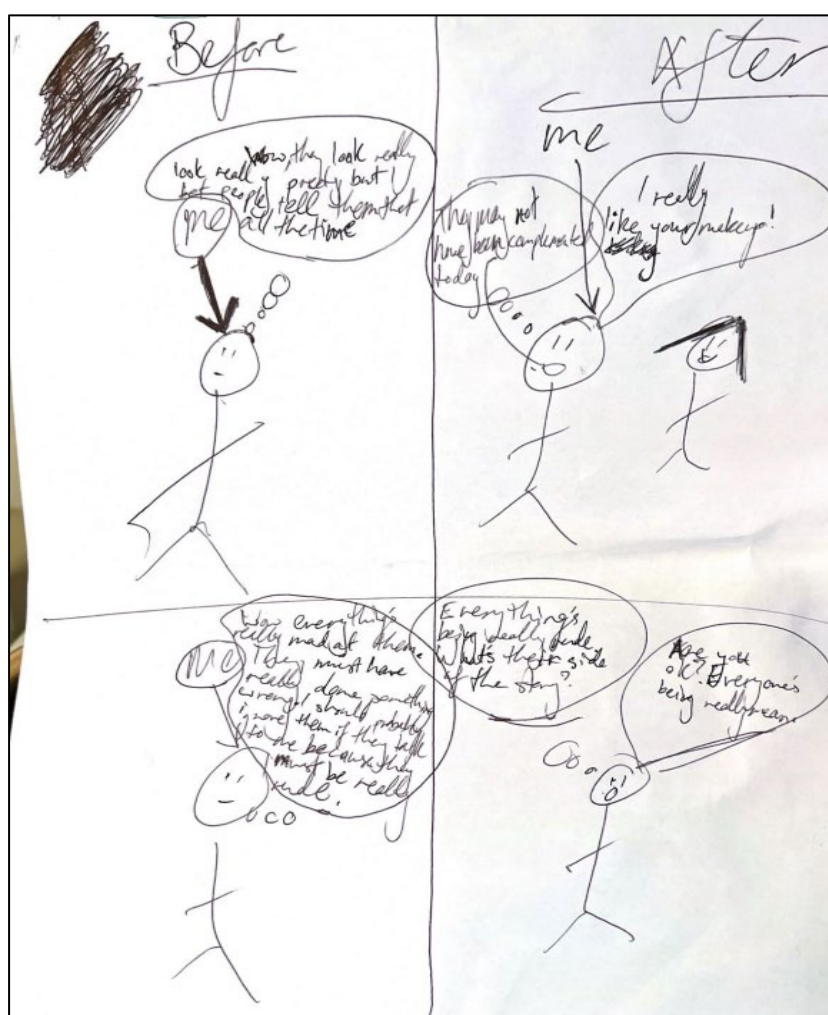
As spect-actors within the drama classroom, the students had a safe space to explore emotions without real-world repercussions. This led to a better understanding of how

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emotions influence behaviour and decision-making. When students observed their peers engaging in similar roleplaying, they could see how different individuals experienced and processed emotions differently, gaining a more nuanced comprehension of emotions. During the discussion, Emily built on Daisy's explanation, revealing her increased awareness of the dissonance between one's online mask and emotional state, suggesting a shift towards a more empathetic understanding that an outwardly happy appearance can mask deep sadness. Emily said, "We looked at what goes on behind the screens, and it changed my perspective on what I think people might be going through. They might seem really happy, but they could be super sad" (FG-UE).

Figure 5.6

Visualising a Shift Toward Empathy and Emotional Understanding



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Note. Figure 5.6 (FG-UE) was collected from the Tedrain High School focus group and provides a visual testament to the student's growth in emotional understanding, as influenced by the drama teaching and learning program. The drawing illustrates a shift from passive to active emotional engagement, highlighting the transition from internal contemplation to outward expression and empathy. The "Before" and "After" scenarios demonstrate a tangible shift in student behaviour: from withholding compliments and making assumptions to openly expressing kindness and seeking to understand others' situations.

In the top panels, the 'Before' scenario depicts a male figure contemplating complimenting someone but deciding against it, thinking they probably receive compliments all the time. In the 'After' scenario, the same figure compliments a female figure, who seems pleased with the thought, "They may not have been complimented lately."

The bottom panels illustrate a figure internalising the thought, "Everyone is really mad at someone, I should ignore them, they must be rude," before the unit. After the unit, the figure considers the other side of the story and asks the other characters if they are okay. This suggests that the student feels the experience has strengthened their capacity to empathise and communicate.

These visual and narrative insights from the focus groups across all four research sites highlighted the profound impact of drama pedagogy on students' emotional development. As I move to the next section on teacher observations, it becomes evident that the integration of drama in teaching digital citizenship enhances empathy and understanding among students in various ways. Some students reported personal growth through roleplaying, allowing them to see situations from multiple perspectives, while others found that the collaborative nature of drama helped them engage more deeply with their peers' emotions. This varied engagement prepared them to navigate complex emotional landscapes in the blended world. These student reflections were reinforced by teachers' observations, which offered insight into the progression students made throughout the program.

5.3 Teacher Insights on Student Progression

Teachers noted shifts in their students' behaviour, particularly their increased engagement with ethical discussions and collaborative activities. These insights provided an external validation of the students' transformation, highlighting the role of drama in fostering responsibility and ethical reflection. While focusing on teacher observations, I will also incorporate student reflections to provide a comprehensive view of their development. Examples will highlight the theme of self-expression and discovery, demonstrating how students have grown in these areas by participating in drama activities. By including both teacher insights and student reflections, I aim to emphasise the impact of drama pedagogy on students' integrated learning and their development of self-expression and discovery.

At all four research sites I noted that the teachers were pleasantly surprised when their students exhibited perceptual and behavioural changes. Initially, students and teachers met the proposal for the unit with reluctance. However, as students became more engaged and open, the teachers relaxed into the conversations, encouraging more open discussions. This allowed me to observe how the integrated learning environment of drama and digital citizenship enabled the students' development of self-expression and discovery.

I remember Mr Simon reflecting on this during his interview. He shared how gratifying it was to see the students not just talking about the negatives of digital media but also recognising its positive impacts. He said, "While listening to the kids, it was gratifying to see how they looked at the positives of digital media as well. Hearing the kids through the different experiences that they had, both through the explorations and in the end, I think, has expanded my view on the kind of positive impact that they can have on the world within digital citizenship. Now, the incorporation of drama pedagogy has made the process a more positive experience rather than just talking about safety" (I-GFDC). This reflection highlighted the shift in focus from merely discussing safety to appreciating the broader implications of digital citizenship.

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Ms Skye built upon this in her interview, referring to specific moments when her students explored concepts of justice and ideal image, roleplaying, switching perspectives, and demonstrating compassionate action and language. She mentioned how her students used Boal's Image Theatre to embody their ideals of justice in digital dilemmas. These exercises embodied the process of stepping into another's shoes, providing opportunities for students to consider what it feels like to be in another person's position. She shared:

Looks of empathy are evident throughout the process because a lot of what they were doing had to do something with it. More importantly for me, they were very clear about what was right and wrong, what they should and should not do, what they had to do, and what they should not have done. There were very clear examples of that in their playbuilding. I think we even did a thing of justice. I think we did like an ideal image and Boal's Image Theatre, where they worked through the ideal image of justice. They understand being put in somebody else's shoes and, you know, being another character and what it feels like to be that person who is experiencing that because we explore being in other people's shoes all the time. With Boal, there is an activity whereby you are changing perspective by being the other person. They switch roles from the mother to the child or bystander to the bullied. They see different perspectives, and they can empathise and show compassion through their actions, what they say, or body language. Using empathy, they can show compassion for the person who is going through the experience. They were able to understand that through their personal experience, they were able to use that information positively and understand that words hurt. (I-EU)

Mrs Elsa discussed observing an improvement in empathy and understanding within her students, facilitated by drama pedagogy. This approach enabled her students to better comprehend and empathise with the feelings of others, drawing connections to social justice and beginning to empower them with the emotional and cognitive tools for recognising and challenging inequalities. She emphasised giving students space in drama to explore diverse

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perspectives, broadening their understanding and equipping them to contribute to social justice initiatives actively. "I think they wanted to encourage empathy. They are quite a proud social justice group that is intrigued by who gets a fair go, but it's all about justice and getting a timeout" (I-EU). Aligning the drama pedagogy with opportunities for learning about the principles of social justice was beginning to prepare students to become compassionate advocates for change.

Social justice was grounded in understanding and compassion in all four schools. Mr Simon noted that through drama pedagogy, students could develop a more profound sense of understanding and compassion, allowing them to empathise more profoundly with victims in videos and playbuilding exercises, grasping the complexities of their experiences. He described a 'lightbulb' moment when students realised the cyclical pattern of bullying and how individuals who engage in bullying might themselves have previously been victims.

I think compassion and empathy were the two biggest things that came out of it for me. There was a lot more exploring the role of the victim. There was certainly that moment when they looked at two social media videos in one of the slideshows, which spoke about bullying being cyclical. The video expanded the empathy. Before that moment, they had been very much focused on the victim or the oppressed, but then they looked at that expansion of how it is about looking for solutions to problems that exist. Often, bullies are just as common victims as they were in the past. I think that video was quite effective for them in understanding that there's that cyclicality, and it really brought about compassion, not just for the victim, but for that broader sense that we as a community and society, that unless we have some form of circuit breaker, we will continue to have these issues. (I-EU)

Mrs Thomas also used an example of Forum Theatre to foster empathy and understanding among her students and their interactions. She referred to a specific lesson that I observed, which focused on the roles of bystanders in scenarios identified from the student's personal concerns. She noted that the practical experience of adopting various roles within Forum

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Theatre exercises allowed students to gain a broader perspective, moving beyond their often-self-centred adolescent views to a more inclusive understanding of others' perspectives. Forum Theatre allowed her students to immerse themselves in the complexities of social justice issues and, through empathy and understanding, resolve conflicts and advocate for change. Through this approach, students learned about the theoretical aspects of empathy and justice and applied their learnings through playbuilding, leading to meaningful personal and collective growth.

I also find that drama makes them more empathetic, and the relationships between each other improved because stepping into someone else's shoes makes them realise that it is not just them in their world, which teenagers can get caught up in. I saw justice and empathy in the forum of theatre in week two. One of the benefits of this course is that it pushed them in a way that I do not think I could have done at this point in the year. So, I am just learning about the practitioner. In the second week, I went through Forum Theatre again. As we progressed in that lesson on Forum Theatre, they learned about justice by playing around with the kind of words that could trigger the bully or intercept the issue. They understood justice not being like good versus evil, but how justice could be achieved in a real-world setting through Forum Theatre and then empathy. The theatre allowed them to explore things in different roles and experience empathy with each other because it was a difficult activity. (I-EU)

Drama facilitated emotional understanding, highlighting its critical role in enriching learning, particularly in areas such as digital citizenship, where its potential to drive positive outcomes is immense. Ms Skye emphasised the unique capacity of drama to create a safe environment where students can freely navigate and articulate their feelings regarding complex and sensitive issues. Mr Simon and Mrs Thomas supported this idea, noting that drama serves as an effective means for exploring emotions in depth. The drama classroom transformed into a space that allowed students to engage in meaningful dialogue and

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develop emotional resilience. Activities like Invisible Theatre introduced students to a supportive atmosphere that valued open communication and empathy from the beginning of their learning journey. "The Drama classroom is always a safe space to discuss issues, as we saw in the very first instance of the unit when we did the Invisible Theatre activity. That automatically puts them in a safe space to discuss those issues" (I-UE), said Ms Skye.

Reflecting on the role of drama in fostering emotional resilience, Mr Simon shared insights on how drama pedagogy aids students in navigating and recovering from emotional challenges by effectively understanding and managing their feelings. By embodying different roles and characters, students deepen their reflection on personal experiences and cultivate a balanced emotional and intellectual comprehension, enhancing their overall learning intention.

They understand that once something is online, it will always be there. I think that has always been there, but it became more real to them when they started taking on that role of character, drawing on the elements of drama. There was a kind of a more visceral response to the consequences that existed. There has always been an intellectual understanding of what was in the course, but the biggest part was then connecting to it, feeling the consequences as opposed to just knowing the consequences. I do not think there was that emotional resonance until they started taking on the roles and having the opportunity to be the victim in those different scenes. (I-UE)

Through roleplaying and Invisible Theatre, Mrs Thomas described her perspective of how drama pedagogy evoked strong emotional reactions from her students, facilitating connections between their personal experiences and broader societal issues. She emphasised that engaging in these activities enabled students to articulate their feelings about being targeted online and created a platform for discussing more sensitive topics. According to Mrs Thomas, the process was transformative for some students, offering them a rare opportunity to confront and process emotions they had previously kept hidden.

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I think for some of them, as we witnessed, there was one or two people in my class who had quite a visceral response to some of the activities that were quite confronting for them. It made them realise their role and connect what was happening in class to the real world. For some of those students, there was a real connection between their real-world experiences and what was happening in the classroom. Some of them were very open and shared stories about being trolled, trolling, and facing bullies online. The performances made students confront these emotions. The performances brought to the surface things that students were hiding related to sexuality. (I-UE)

This reflection and sharing process is an example of how a safe drama space provides a powerful opportunity for students to process and understand their feelings related to their digital identities and interactions. By engaging in drama, students explore and articulate their emotions in a context that directly connects to their experiences online, enhancing their emotional awareness and resilience in the blended world.

As I observed these changes unfold in the classrooms, the effectiveness of drama pedagogy in enhancing emotional understanding and empathy among students became increasingly clear. The reflections from Mr Simon, Ms Skye, Mrs Elsa, and Mrs Thomas supported how this teaching approach impacted the students. Beyond the increased emotional awareness, I noticed integrated learning emerging as a key theme. The dynamic, interactive learning opportunities within the drama classroom engaged students emotionally and helped them connect these insights to broader academic and personal development.

For the students and teachers in this study, drama pedagogy fostered emotional understanding and intellectual engagement, providing a holistic educational approach to teaching digital citizenship. Students connected their feelings with critical thinking by integrating emotional and cognitive development within the drama classroom, enhancing their overall learning experience. This coexistence of emotional and intellectual growth prepared the students to navigate complex concepts more thoroughly. Incorporating digital

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tools and online behaviours into drama activities enriched the holistic approach, effectively integrating technology into the curriculum while facilitating meaningful discussions about its use.

Drama pedagogy in integrated learning encourages students to make connections between various topics, fostering the development of new experiences and a broader knowledge base. In Mr Simon's class, Forum Theatre was used to explore online conflicts and ethical dilemmas, such as scenarios involving cyberbullying and privacy breaches. Students assumed roles as both victims and bystanders, enacting how these situations unfold in the digital world (O-RUT). Forum Theatre provided a space for the students to step in, challenge characters' actions, and propose alternative solutions to prevent conflict escalation. This allowed students to critically reflect on their own online behaviours and consider the real-world consequences of their actions and the complexities of handling online bullying.

In Ms Skye's class, Sculpting activities allowed students to reflect on the different personas they adopt online (O-SED). Through Boal's Image theatre, students sculpted each other into representations of their 'ideal' digital selves. They actively unpacked the transition from negative online behaviours (e.g., trolling) to more constructive outcomes, fostering self-awareness and empathy. In his research, Zembylas (2022) discusses the concept of 'aesthetic injustice', where certain voices or perspectives are marginalised or excluded due to societal norms or hierarchical structures, often in educational contexts. During this observation, the students' online personas, created to reflect or, in contrast, resist societal norms, were brought to the surface and discussed through Boal's Image Theatre. This caused the students to reflect on how their digital identities both shape, and are shaped, by societal and ethical norms (O- EPDC, SED, RUT). The activity prompted consideration of hidden and marginalised identities by allowing the students to critically reflect on the characters they might play online. It also fostered empathy and ethical decision making, which challenged existing norms and helped them recognise the complexities of online and offline interactions and personas.

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By using integrated learning to teach digital citizenship, teachers are not only addressing students' immediate digital literacy needs but also equipping them for a future in which digital skills, critical thinking, and ethical online behaviour will be vital (OECD, 2018). Drama pedagogy extends beyond responding to current digital challenges. It actively prepares students to face future complexities by fostering empathy, ethical decision-making, and self-awareness, essential for becoming responsible digital citizens.

Boal's methods provided a platform for applying these forward-thinking strategies across all research sites. Kina and Fernandes (2017) suggest that Boal's techniques foster critical consciousness by helping participants understand and challenge the power structures in their social environments, promoting reflection and social action. The students in this research demonstrated this when they explored complex online behaviours, such as the consequences of recording and posting without thinking, using symbolic representations to critique both anti-social⁵² and pro-social digital actions. This structured, cross-school approach, represented by Ms Skye and Mr Simon, ensured that students responsibly engaged with future-oriented methods for navigating the blended world.

Ms Skye mentioned the integration of digital citizenship into the drama curriculum, emphasising the use of an integrated learning approach that connects with the NSW drama elements. She explained that incorporating drama elements such as focus, conflict, actor-audience relationship, character, symbol, mood, place, and atmosphere provides students with opportunities to develop a comprehensive understanding of digital citizenship. This approach aligns with the NSW Drama syllabus outcomes of 5.1.4⁵³ and 5.2.3⁵⁴ (BOS, 2003), which focus on structuring and refining dramatic ideas and employing various dramatic techniques to create meaning. By systematically reinforcing key terms and concepts, Ms

⁵² Anti-social behaviour refers to actions that harm or lack consideration for others, especially in social contexts.

⁵³ 5.1.4 – “Explores, structures and refines ideas using dramatic forms, performance styles, dramatic techniques, theatrical conventions, and technologies” (BOS, 2003).

⁵⁴ 5.2.3 – “Employs a variety of dramatic forms, performance styles, dramatic techniques, theatrical conventions, and technologies to create dramatic meaning” (BOS, 2003).

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Skye fostered a nuanced understanding of digital citizenship themes, ensuring that students could engage with these ideas in a meaningful and sustained way.

Ms Skye further acknowledged how integrated learning draws connections between the drama syllabus and digital citizenship concepts, enabling students to draw parallels between drama techniques and the possibilities of digital interactions. This approach does more than enhance students' understanding of the topics. It also outlines how vital the drama process is, for instance, the setting, mood, or conflict, in creating performances or presentations that are not only engaging but also meaningful, even when these performances are taking place in digital environments like online forums or social media. In digital citizenship, understanding the drama elements helps students convey messages more effectively and responsibly online, whether creating digital content, interacting in virtual spaces, or participating in online discussions. To summarise, students can apply the skills learned through drama, such as audience engagement, to how they present themselves and communicate in the digital world.

We use drama, which enables us to look at focus, conflict, actor-audience relationship, symbolism, characterisation, changing roles, and different perspectives. We have looked at scenarios, settings, moods, and atmosphere. We integrated all the elements of drama. The conflict and tension are explored through doing and often reiterating. I try to say things like we are going to focus on tension today or the difference between conflict, tension, mood, atmosphere, character, and role. I am constantly reiterating the terminology for them. (O-IL)⁵⁵

The teachers' reflections extended beyond the syllabus concepts outlined above. Initially, Ms Skye was hesitant about integrating digital citizenship into drama, viewing it as a challenge rather than an embedded part of her teaching. However, over the course of the research, she recognised how the iterative and reflective nature of drama pedagogy deepened

⁵⁵O indicates data drawn from class observations. IL refers to the theme Integrated Learning.

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students' engagement with digital citizenship in an embodied way. In later reflections, she acknowledged technology's potential to support creative and critical engagement rather than act as a distraction and described how it could be meaningfully incorporated into drama-based learning.

As her confidence grew, Ms Skye shifted from uncertainty to actively embracing technology's role in drama classes. During her interview, she described how her perspective had evolved from apprehension to seeing technology as a valuable addition to drama pedagogy, enhancing interactive and participatory learning experiences. She discussed the need for a balanced approach, where technology enhances learning without dominating it, particularly in the context of digital citizenship learning through drama. She said, "I think it should be integrated as opposed to relying on one element. When we started to introduce the iPad into the classroom about three or four years ago, it wasn't easy, especially in drama, but now I see its benefits. Technology in the drama classroom should be integrated" (O-IL).

The discussion on integrated learning extended again to consider the learning environment in the interview with Mr Simon. He addressed integrated learning by detailing how drama techniques like Invisible Theatre and the spect-actor concept from Augusto Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979) can foster a dynamic learning environment. He drew connections between the supportive classroom environment established within the drama space and the potential of integrated learning for digital citizenship, where students are comfortable trying new things, referring to their experiences of Invisible Theatre. Invisible Theatre, in this context, becomes a tool for students to explore digital interactions and their consequences creatively and reflectively. Invisible Theatre and the spect-actor examples from Boal's work encourage students to experiment, think critically, and actively engage with concepts of digital citizenship themes. The spect-actor concept in Boal empowered student engagement and encouraged them to think critically about digital citizenship.

Mr Simon drew connections to Invisible Theatre through integrated learning experiences and, as a result, noted a behaviour shift in his students. He recalled, "For instance, they

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were excited about Invisible Theatre. They were quite excited about looking at the implementation of Invisible Theatre in a more meaningful way. That is when we have all the music and drama things on stage. I sold them on the Boal and spect-actor. They were quite interested because it was something outside their experience" (I-IL, B). As researcher, I observed a few instances of Mr Simon's students participating in Invisible Theatre. His students would craft their pieces of Invisible Theatre while simultaneously gaining an understanding of their classmates' knowledge of various concepts of digital citizenship. One particular observation I witnessed at this school was an Invisible Theatre performance involving two students having a staged disagreement due to something the other posted on social media. By crafting and performing their theatre pieces, students not only solidified their grasp of the concepts they identified at that moment but also provided an opportunity during the class reflection on the performance for students to see their roles as leaders within their school community, demonstrating the practical application and relevance of their learning. The integrated approach supported the practical application and student-led learning for solid understanding.

One of the really great things was as much as this unit focuses on safety and citizenship, a factor that they all held onto is the positive role that it played during lockdown. I think this group, more than any other group in previous years, has had to be digital citizens. For our final project, part of the course originally was taking some of what they had learned in these sessions and applying them to the school's [TeenCitz]⁵⁶ Sessions, which aimed to promote wellbeing at the school. They crafted a piece of theatre for school. So, they saw their role not just as individuals learning for their digital citizenship but also taking out that role of leadership within the school and how they could help others access some of their learning. (O-IL, SED)

Reflecting on Mr Simon's insights, I observed how students exemplified integrated learning through their journey from learning about digital citizenship to embodying it as leaders and

⁵⁶ The program's name has been changed to protect the identity of the school.

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creators. The leadership emerged when students took ownership of the Invisible Theatre piece, guiding their classmates through the playbuilding and performance process. The students assumed roles of director and performers, collaboratively playbuilding a narrative, and assigning roles to ensure each voice contributed to the performance's purpose (O-C). With a focus on audience engagement, they considered how the scene would challenge the audience's assumptions and provoke thoughtful reactions, using the performance as a mirror to reflect the complexities of digital behaviour. This required organisational skills and encouraged them to lead by example in presenting responsible digital behaviour (O-RUT).

They did not just absorb information; they transformed it into action. Through the Invisible Theatre piece, they tackled issues like privacy violations and online manipulation, going beyond the simple rules of 'do's and don'ts' by creating scenarios that forced both their peers and audience members to confront the emotional and ethical implications of their online actions (O-RUT). The piece required the audience to interact with what appeared to be a normal situation but later revealed deeper digital citizenship dilemmas. The performance allowed the audience to reflect on the complexities of digital decision-making and consider their actions' emotional and societal consequences (O-PSS, SED).

They demonstrated leadership and engagement when playbuilding their Invisible Theatre piece (O-C). Instead of adhering to conventional 'do's and don'ts,' students actively explored the complexities of digital citizenship, confronting ethical dilemmas and fostering deeper reflection. As Heath (2018) argues, digital citizenship should be reframed as active civic engagement with an emphasis on social justice and critical reflection. Rather than focusing solely on digital etiquette or safety, this approach encourages students to critically engage with broader social issues. My observation showed how the students began to demonstrate leadership in class when modelling responsible online behaviour while helping their peers navigate difficult digital situations (O- C, RUT). The role-switching and perspective-taking activities reflect this justice-oriented approach, as students engaged thoughtfully with digital dilemmas and acted as responsible digital citizens. It was a dynamic and participatory

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learning process where education was not just about individual growth but also about contributing to the holistic wellbeing of the school community.

This deepened understanding extended beyond individual performances to the students' reflections on how online and offline worlds have become blended. Mrs Skye mentioned a specific comment made by Jasmine during the Lupaw High School focus group, where Jasmine realised how digital interactions were increasingly inseparable from face-to-face communication. Referring to Jasmine's reflection, Ms Skye reflected on the following quote as a key moment in the students' developing understanding of digital citizenship. Jasmine shared,

Over the past three years, the things that we do online and the way that we interact with others offline have kind of blend into one joint thing, especially with the rise of apps like TikTok. The way we talk, interact with posts, and comment online is the same as what we say when we talk every day, especially with our peers. Technology has become so integrated into our lives that it feels like one big interaction with the world, not particularly divided between online and offline. (FG-EPDC, C)

Ms Skye noted that Jasmine's reflection was a powerful example of the broader shift she observed among her students, as they increasingly recognised the inseparability of their online and offline worlds, strengthening their understanding of digital citizenship.

It was becoming clear that while the students' perceptions and behaviours were growing, so too was their understanding of the complexities of digital citizenship. Drama offered students and teachers a nuanced approach to understanding complex topics such as digital citizenship rather than simply telling them what to do or not to do. Canning (2020) discusses how theatre provides a platform for exploring and redefining citizenship, encouraging students to reflect on their roles in their communities and inspire action toward inclusivity and social justice. In line with Canning's insights, my findings reveal that students began to see themselves as active participants in shaping their digital environments, demonstrating a

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profound shift in their engagement with digital citizenship concepts. As the students engaged with self-expression and discovery, I observed noticeable shifts in how they interacted with others. Through Invisible Theatre, students engaged in performances without the audience's awareness and found a powerful outlet for voicing their opinions. This process enabled them to explore and assert their personal boundaries more confidently but also foster a deeper understanding of their responsibilities as digital citizens, reinforcing the potential of drama pedagogy to cultivate proactive and empathetic community members.

Based on the interview responses, the impact of drama pedagogy for self-expression and discovery continued to be a recurrent theme, particularly highlighted by the use of techniques and elements such as Invisible Theatre, symbolism, and masks. These methods allowed students to participate in immersive, structured, or improvised scenarios, resulting in playbuilding through meaningful and open conversations. Ms Skye's use of Invisible Theatre provides an example of a considerable realisation among students about personal boundaries and the impact of joining a discussion or offering an opinion/advice without being asked or invited. This was an impactful learning moment, allowing students to experience how it feels when someone intervenes in their matters without permission, emphasising the value of privacy and consent in interactions. Ms Skye shared,

Throughout, I think one of the very first moments when I introduced the Invisible Theatre example to them about the little scenario was when I found it interesting how the students responded to me, not my own business, which I did on purpose. So, to backtrack the scenario, I asked a group of students the day before to create a scene in class prior to anybody's knowledge. They were to sit in the circle and start a conversation about that and try to get as many people in the audience as they could in that conversation, so they tried to do that, and I spurred them on. I kept asking questions and putting my nose into it, which they did not like. During the debriefing moment, they said "Miss, we were angry with you because you kept asking questions, and it had nothing to do with you. It was our business, and we wanted to

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tell you about this stop". That was the light bulb moment for me because they kind of already knew what was right and wrong. They expressed how it makes them feel when others get involved with comments. The drama room creates a safe space. In a way, drama allows for a little bit of debriefing and exploration of what is really going on. Often, it is the only subject where they can, you know, explore those issues in a safe place and release them. It is cathartic in a way. (I-SED)

Mrs Elsa also discussed how drama created an environment where students felt comfortable sharing their experiences and viewpoints. She observed that by fostering a space that supports open dialogue her students on paths of self-reflection and maturity, helping them better understand their place in the world. Mrs Elsa noted,

It has provoked their thoughts about their place in the world, how other people see them and how they see others. They felt more mature because of the experience. They felt that they were reflecting and part of a sophisticated self-discovery. In every lesson, they were certainly more confident in having time and wanting to try things out. The topic and the content were engaging because I had never seen such overwhelmingly generous log booking. Well, they really wanted to talk, debate, discover, share, reflect, and self-witness. They were very self-reflective and responsible for their own discoveries as well, which made it clear how much they were willing to share and log. (I-SED)

Mr Simon expanded on the conversation by highlighting how symbolism was crucial in deepening students' understanding of their interactions with the world. During a warm-up activity called 'leapfrog' in week 2, lesson 2, students were initially hesitant due to its physical nature and the fear of 'looking silly' in front of their peers. However, initially perceived as a physical challenge, this activity emerged as a powerful metaphor for navigating hurdles and developing resilience. Mr Simon observed how the students engaged deeply with the symbolism and metaphors of the activity, reflecting on their experiences and how they engaged with the world. He explained,

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It was one of the symbolism exercises where I got them to play leapfrog. There was not meant to be a great deal of me, but they were so hesitant to engage with this element where they had not done it before because of the physicality and looking silly in front of each other. I thought they would do leapfrog, and then we would talk about some base level of symbolism, but it became this quite deep engagement with the symbolism and metaphors of engaging with the activity itself. They could start seeing not just how the program itself taught them things about how they engage with the world but also how it helped them reflect on their experiences. (I-SED)

In addition to symbolism, Mr Simon emphasised the role of masks in supporting students' self-expression. The use of masks in roleplay became a central focus of the unit, allowing students to voice their individuality and explore personal stories in a way that felt less vulnerable. The anonymity provided by the masks enabled students to explore and share emotive experiences without feeling exposed. He noted,

They were very much talking about the fractured self, the masks they played with, different media technologies, and various communities and focus. When they were doing those performances, they were drawing on the experiences, but it was not immediately obvious, even with a close-knit group; I do not think they were always willing to share their personal experiences. There was always a level of being removed from their experiences, which I think is a good thing because it meant that they could explore things from their personal experiences, but they could always say it was the character rather than themselves. Masks always provided a safety net so that they could move past some of those things that happened in the past. I do not think it was that much of a negative, having a separation between character and themselves where it never had to be explicit. I suspect some of them might have been aware of that with friends who were exploring different things that had happened in different situations, but they kept quite quiet. (I-SED)

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In another response, Mrs Thomas elaborated on how drama pedagogy impacts students' self-expression and discovery. Through drama, students developed an understanding of how their online selves and the various masks they wear resemble reflections of their identities. In the bystander lesson outlined by Mrs Thomas below, I observed students engaged in activities that challenged them to rethink their roles when deciding what to do in specific scenarios, like witnessing a conflict and the responsibility of recording or sharing such events online. Students navigated the complex dynamics of being bystanders in digital spaces. Through exercises like brainstorming situations where people can become bystanders and reflecting on the implications of sharing footage of a fight, students explored the ethical repercussions that could result from their digital actions. It prompted deep reflections on how their online behaviour reflects their true selves and behaviour in the blended world. This awareness led to a deeper understanding of how the online and offline worlds blend, prompting students to consider their actions and engage in the blended world with increased awareness and agency. Mrs Thomas shared,

I think a lot of them realise who they are online despite their usernames and their weird meme pictures reflecting themselves. They were able to realise that, on the other side, human beings are living their lives just like them, and therefore, the digital and real world are very blended. I think there was an element of self-discovery when we did the bystander because we did that video in which someone was recording a fight. They realised that re-posting the fight is still linking to them by becoming a bystander. (I-SED)

Before moving on to the next section, I will briefly summarise the development of perceptions and behaviours observed across the four research sites. The findings reveal that students moved from passive recipients of digital citizenship concepts to active participants demonstrating empathy, critical thinking, leadership, and ethical decision-making in navigating digital spaces. They began to recognise the blended nature of their online and offline interactions, developed a heightened awareness of digital behaviours' emotional and

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ethical implications, and showed increased self-expression, collaboration, and personal growth through drama activities. These shifts highlight the potential of drama pedagogy for helping students grasp the complexities of digital citizenship and fostering their development as responsible, empathetic digital citizens. The following section will focus on how their engagement with drama pedagogy has shaped participants' perceptions and behaviours mid-way through the unit.

5.4 Mid-Program Reflections: Deepening Student Perspectives

At the halfway mark of the program, the students' reflections revealed a deeper internalisation of digital citizenship concepts compared to the initial shifts observed earlier. While the first reflections highlighted early curiosity and engagement, these mid-program reflections demonstrated a more profound application and understanding of empathy, ethical considerations, and leadership, both in online and offline spaces. The students' discussions at this stage moved from surface-level understanding and began to reflect growth in their ability to navigate the complexities of digital interactions.

By examining the focus group discussions, I gained insights into how drama pedagogy enhances self-expression and discovery within a blended, human-centred world. Unlike the earlier stages, where students were just beginning to explore these ideas, the mid-program reflections reveal a deeper internalisation of digital citizenship principles, including active participation in ethical decision-making and leadership roles. The reflections also show how learning digital citizenship through drama, compared to traditional methods, creates a more open and supportive environment for dialogue and self-expression. In this section, I presented evidence from students and teachers insights to illustrate the impact of the teaching and learning program on student development at the midpoint of the program.

The focus group responses with the students supported the teachers' realisations regarding the role of drama in fostering self-expression and discovery within the context of a blended, human-centred world. The focus group at Lupaw High School identified the specific benefits

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of learning about digital citizenship through drama compared to other more conventional methods, such as presentations typically given at school assemblies. Students found the drama classroom a more conducive environment for open dialogue and self-expression.

While these early observations offered initial insights, examining how the structure and activities within the drama classroom shape this unique environment is essential. Unlike the passive nature of assembly presentations, the interactive and participatory format of Drama engaged students on a personal level, encouraging them to voice their opinions and explore different perspectives without fear of judgment. Everest's response below outlined that the drama classroom offered a more welcoming and supportive environment for open dialogue and self-expression. She said, "I am more comfortable putting my hand up in a class than in an assembly. I would not like to feel that I am going to get judged. In a classroom, you feel that you can get your opinion in, and it is a lot of joy." (FG-SED) This reinforced the need to create a space where students feel valued and heard. The psychological safety that Everest is referring to is not incidental but a result of a carefully structured drama activities that prioritise student voice and encourage exploration. The drama space fostered a safe emotional and learning environment allowing students to engage more deeply with digital citizenship concepts as active participants, rather than passive recipients of information as seen in more conventional formats.

Figure 5.7

Self-Expression and Discovery – Save the Animals

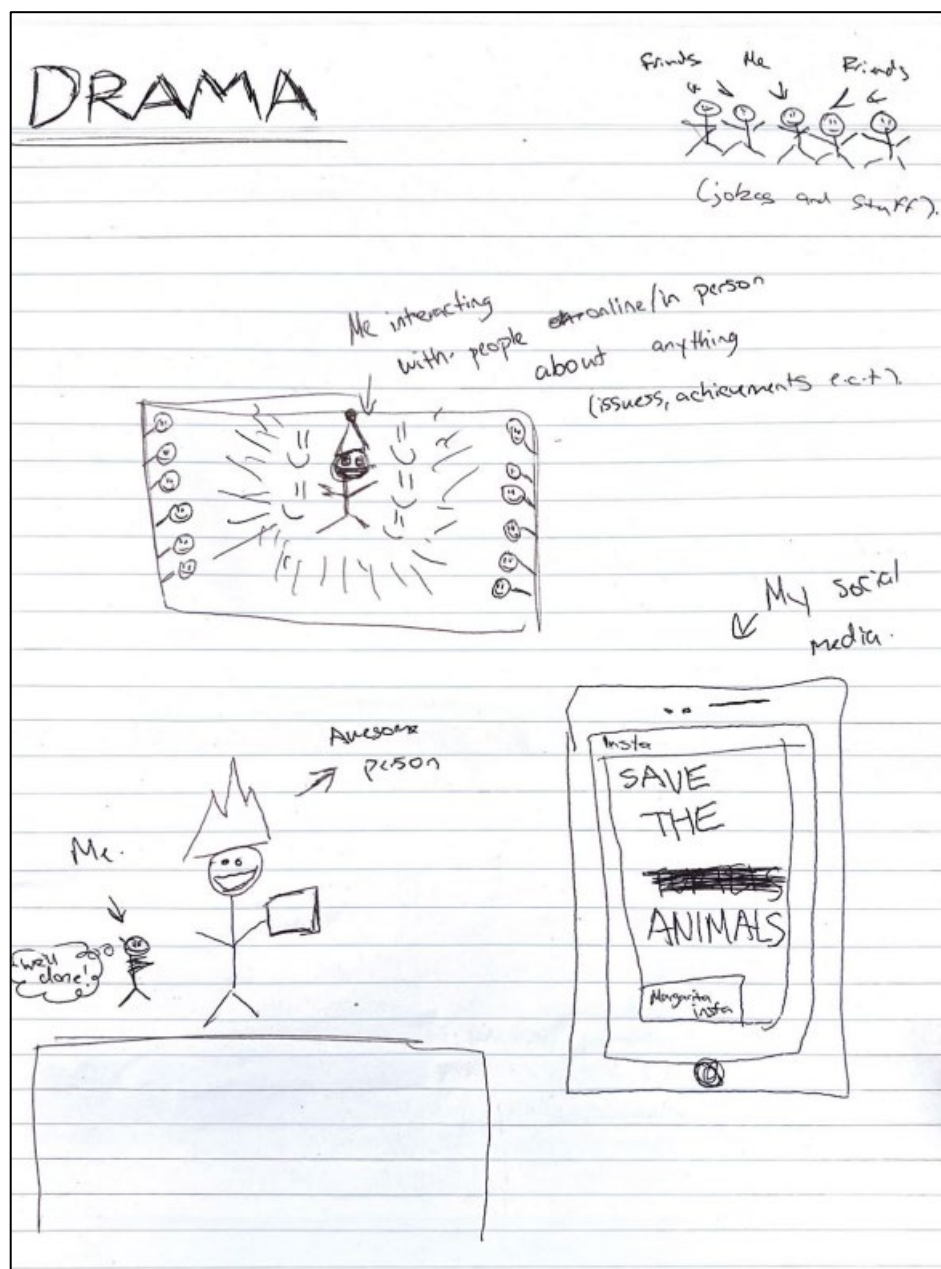


Figure 5.7 from Lupaw High School narrates a student's personal growth and expression journey, influenced by their engagement with drama pedagogy. The drawing depicts a scenario where students actively consider their actions and interactions to make positive contributions online and in person.

The figure presents four representations of students applying their new drama knowledge for good. The first drawing shows the student enjoying moments with friends, reflecting the joy,

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collaboration, and friendship fostered through drama class. The second drawing illustrates the student confidently engaging in online and offline discussions about various topics, symbolising the enhanced communication skills and openness gained through the unit. In the third image, the student uses Instagram to advocate for change by posting 'save the animals,' demonstrating increased confidence in using their voice and the online space as a platform for activism and change. The final section of the drawing indicates the student's growth in self-expression and influence as a result of the drama unit. Whether they are reaching out to others or becoming an "awesome person," it reflects the impact of positive online engagement and the power of self-expression in shaping their identity and influencing others. This drawing illustrates that this student learnt to express themselves, their values, and their actions' consequences in the blended world through drama. It enabled them to be confident, stand up for their beliefs, engage meaningfully with their community, and shape their digital tattoo in a positive and intentional way (FG-SED).

The focus group discussions and drawings in Madike High School also recognised a student's ability to see their development of self-expression and discovery as a result of the drama learning. Tiana added that drama pedagogy enhanced her discovery by allowing her to recognise and confront her biases, a step towards personal growth.

I think it helped me recognise some traits in myself and my circles that I judge in others because they are part of a group that I do not like. I realised I perceived them to be judgmental, and I realised I was judging people, too. It made me realise that everybody who consumes different media has different likes and dislikes, and there are always going to be traits in yourself or your circles that are not going to be as desirable, or you find that you do not like others. I realised that I should probably start recognising these things in what I do and how I can become a better digital citizen and person offline. (FG-SED)

Rapunzel added to Tiana's insights on judging by indicating that humans are judgemental in nature.

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When Tiana said that they were judging people who were judging others, it resonated with me. I think it is part of human nature to judge, but we must stop projecting our insecurities onto other people. We may judge, but we cannot say that is their entire character because they have because people are complex, and it is not like they are just one thing. If you are friends with someone and you notice that they do this one thing that's just so annoying to you and hate it, you cannot stop being friends. You should recognise that if they are really your friend, is it that important to drop them for that specific part of their character, or can you ignore it and continue being friends with them? (FG-SED)

Belle emphasised the intertwined nature of digital and "real" citizenship, noting that the digital world radically impacts how society functions. This blend of online and offline experiences comprehensively addresses both realms of digital citizenship education.

I think there are some distinctions between digital and real citizenship, but a lot of them have also blended, especially with our generation because we grew up with the internet. I feel like some people still attempt to address the two as different entities, and in several ways, they are different, but in a lot of ways, they are very much coming together, clashing, and depending on each other. We need to acknowledge that because it has a big impact. There are so many ways that our society itself functions, and it is very reliant on technology and the online or digital world. It means it is basically impossible to live without digital technology, and, like the online world in a developed country, I think failing to acknowledge that is flawed. (FG-SED)

Figure 5.8

Recognising Ourselves in Others



Note. In this figure, the drawing depicts a person with an open head, showing parts of their mind labelled 'values,' 'likes,' and 'history.' The figure is experiencing a moment of self-reflection, exclaiming, "Hey, these two are the same!" whilst examining a thought in each hand labelled 'trait of mine' and 'a trait I hate in others' (FG-SED).

Figure 5.8 from Madike High School is a visual representation of a student's realisation of the blended world and their role as digital citizens, and it considers the role of other citizens. With a brain labelled 'values,' 'likes,' 'history,' it represents a process of self-reflection. The character, holding thoughts labelled 'trait of mine' and 'a trait I hate in others,' recognises the similarity between self-attributes and those they dislike in others. This visual metaphor supports the theme of Self-Expression and Discovery, drawing and documenting a journey of understanding a student reached when they connected the reflections of their traits in the behaviours they notice of others, bridging the gap between judgment and empathy.

Initial shifts in Student Perceptions and Behaviours

In the Montawl High School focus group, students expressed confidence in articulating their thoughts and feelings, particularly on challenging topics related to oppression or societal pressures. Drama served as a catalyst, providing a safe space for exploration and expression that they identified as more restrictive in other educational environments.

Tsehay reflected on drama's collaborative nature and the unique opportunity for individual expression. She discussed how the skills developed in drama extended to her online behaviour, making her more thoughtful and open to different viewpoints before jumping to conclusions.

I like drama because there is a lot of room for working with other people and for you to express your individuality. It [drama] lets you explore some concepts in a more contained area or space than you would in a different place. Now, I have started to post comments and say, maybe you should wait to see the other side of the story or something like that. (FG-SED)

Bianca spoke of courage and speaking out against opinions, recognising negative judgments' impact on an individual. These focus group responses emphasised drama pedagogy's effect on students' ability to express themselves and the discovery of their agency to make a difference within and beyond the classroom.

It is quite scary, especially when you have a lot of people who are posting the same things, and they are all agreeing with each other. You do not want to be the one going against the flow, but at the same time, you are like, 'I have seen the consequences of what those kinds of judgmental opinions can do to people.' Those comments have caused suicide. I have decided to always post a kind comment in such instances, and maybe it could help stop issues such as suicide. (FG-SED)

The students' reflections and creative outputs, like the drawings from Lupaw and Madike High Schools, demonstrate how engaging with drama allowed them to navigate and articulate their identities online and offline. This approach enriches their understanding of

Initial shifts in Student Perceptions and Behaviours

digital citizenship and empowers them to become more empathetic and self-aware.

Complementing these student perspectives are the observations of their teachers, who provide additional insights into how drama pedagogy has facilitated changes in student behaviour and understanding throughout the program.

Conclusion

This chapter has revealed meaningful shifts in students' perceptions and behaviours regarding digital citizenship, observed mid-way through the u.b.do teaching and learning program. As the program progressed, students began to change their understanding of responsible online engagement, ethical decision-making, and empathy. Boal's methods contributed to this development by enabling critical reflection, creative problem-solving, and collaboration. Through the playbuilding activities and reflective discussions, students shifted their perspectives from being simple users of digital content to critically evaluating how they engage in online spaces. Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979) techniques are well-documented for fostering transformative experiences by allowing participants to reflect on their behaviours and reshape their identities (Howard, 2004). The interactive nature these techniques aligns Howard's perspective that methods such as Forum Theatre help students engage with social and ethical issues, making them active agents of change rather than passive observers (2004). In particular, the Boal activities encouraged students to consider the complexities of online actions and interactions, prompting deeper reflections on trust and ethical responsibility issues. This led to an increased awareness of the ethical dimensions of digital citizenship and a more empathetic understanding of the experiences of others in human-centred and online spaces.

The insights gathered from focus groups and observations highlighted not only the cognitive engagement of students but also their emotional growth. Students became more reflective about their roles in the blended human-centred world, demonstrating increased confidence in navigating the blended space with empathy and ethical consideration. The teachers' observations reinforced these findings, noting enhanced student self-expression and

Initial shifts in Student Perceptions and Behaviours

emotional discovery. The integration of drama pedagogy in teaching digital citizenship proved to be a powerful tool in supporting students' holistic development.

Together, these findings demonstrate drama pedagogy's potential in shaping a student's understanding of digital citizenship. It empowered students to engage more thoughtfully as human-centred blended citizens with a profound sense of empathy, ethical awareness, and reflective practice.

The next chapter will further explore the long-term effects of this program, examining how these shifts in perceptions and behaviours continue to evolve as students progress through the teaching and learning program.

6 Development of Key Concepts and Competencies

In this chapter, I unpack the specific skills and competencies that students developed by integrating drama pedagogy with digital citizenship education. This addresses the research questions: 'How can drama pedagogy impact a student's understanding of citizenship in a human-centred online world?' and 'How do teachers and students interact within the classroom when experiencing and participating in online drama pedagogy?'

I discuss how the drama process facilitated skill development and fostered ethical and digital citizenship understanding among students. I also examine how, despite varied experiences with Web 2.0 technologies, none of the four teachers had fully utilised technology or incorporated citizenship education to its full potential in Drama contexts prior to this research. This aligns with the findings of Stephen and Henrietta (2018), who discuss how teachers often struggle with incorporating Web 2.0 tools into pedagogical practices effectively, particularly when addressing critical digital literacy and citizenship. Through integrated learning, students enhanced their problem-solving abilities, engaged in meaningful reflections on their digital actions and interactions, and learned alongside their teachers. I also outline how Boal's theatre techniques enabled the students to self-identify and understand key digital citizenship concepts.

Observing and listening to the students and teachers reflect on their growth in emotional development highlights the broader impact of drama pedagogy. Over the duration of the study, it becomes evident that drama pedagogy offers more than the common misconception that it is simply about acting or the stereotype that it primarily focuses on developing emotional or 'soft skills'. It serves as a catalyst for cognitive development and problem-solving (Boal, 1979). By engaging in creative thinking and critical reflection, students acquire the capacity to dissect complex situations and construct strategic solutions. This theme of problem-solving skills comes directly from the reflections shared by participants in both the

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interviews and focus groups, supporting the pedagogical value of drama as a tool to improve a student's understanding of digital citizenship.

6.1 Skill Development

At all four schools, I observed that incorporating drama techniques such as masks and Forum Theatre promoted reflection and enhanced problem-solving skills, positively impacting the students in this research. The first moment I identified this was during an observation of Ms Skye's class at Lupaw High School. She highlighted this moment during our interview, "The social mask activity supported the students in understanding how people hide behind the computer world. I think that really resonated with them, but they probably knew on a superficial level that is what was happening" (I-PSS). In this activity, students used masks to represent their online personas, highlighting the disconnection between their real selves and their digital identities. By physically creating these masks, they visualised the layers of anonymity and disconnection that can exist in digital spaces. Recognising and comprehending the issue involved students becoming aware of the ways these online personas can distort reality, concealing true identities or emotions. This realisation marked a critical step in their ability to problem-solve within their digital citizenship roles. By understanding this discrepancy between online and offline identities, students began to critically evaluate their own and others' behaviors in digital spaces.

This activity allowed students to independently examine and understand personally relevant challenges by engaging in both the creation and interpretation of their online personas through social masks. This process was unpacked using the framework of *The Creativity Cascade*, a structured way to develop creativity (Jefferson & Anderson, 2017).

Noticing: The mask activity helped students notice the gap between their digital and physical identities. By physically creating masks, they entered the noticing phase, identifying and acknowledging the differences between their online personas and offline selves.

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Asking Why, Really Why?: As the activity unfolded, students naturally transitioned into the asking why phase. Ms Skye posed thought-provoking questions such as, "Why do we hide behind certain characters online?" (O-SED) and "What or who influences how we portray ourselves online?" (O-SED,EPDC) These questions prompted students to critically reflect on the deeper reasons behind their online behaviors.

Playing with Possibility: The mask activity also engaged students in playing with possibility, as they explored how different personas could shift their interactions and experimented with creative ways to express these personas through visual representation. Students stretched their thinking by exaggerating traits or imagining alternative online identities.

Selecting and Evaluating: In the selecting and evaluating phase, students reflected on their masks and considered the implications of presenting different identities online. This stage of evaluation enabled students to critically assess the broader impact of their digital self-presentation and its effect on how they communicate with others.

Drawing on Boal's (1979) concept of active participation through drama, unpacked through the *Creativity Cascade* (Jefferson & Anderson, 2017) framework, students developed empathy and problem-solving skills but also gained a deeper understanding of the complexities of digital citizenship. Drama pedagogy provided a rich, creative space for students to critically engage with their online identities, linking personal reflection to broader societal issues. This helped students navigate real-life scenarios involving digital conflicts or misrepresentations, reinforcing their roles as responsible digital citizens.

During his interview, Mr Simon also emphasised the value of reflective and autonomous learning. Autonomy, in this context, refers to the student's ability to explore and investigate situations independently without constant guidance from the teacher. Mr Simon discussed how this approach enabled his students to delve deeper into issues.

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For me, the biggest part was not saying things and allowing them to explore things. There was one group that was looking at solutions, and originally, they were micro-focused on the people involved in the beginning, particularly when looking at individual elements of bullying or expanding on social media. Then, there was one group that started to focus more on the expanding role the community plays in solving these problems. They started looking at that campaign and how you step in, not just as individuals, but how you connect with others and empathise as a community. They really tapped into that idea of community and how they can respond individually. It is about how, when they connect with other individuals, their power increases as well. (I-PSS)

Initially, his students focused narrowly on individual experiences, particularly when examining elements of bullying or social media interactions. However, through drama, and specifically through Boal's techniques like Forum Theatre, they began to recognise the expanding role of classmates, school peers, teachers, and the wider school or local community in addressing these problems. These participatory methods allowed students to embody different perspectives within the community, making it clear that collective engagement and empathy were essential in solving these issues.

This shift from an individual to a community focus helped students understand the broader implications of their digital interactions and the collective power of empathy and community engagement. Zembylas (2022) outlines, fostering emotional engagement through education is crucial for developing empathy and critical thinking, particularly in contexts of social justice. In Mrs Thomas' class, Forum Theatre served as a powerful tool for enabling students to navigate conflicts and seek collaborative solutions in a safe environment. This approach not only helped students resolve issues but also reflected Zembylas' concept of emotional reflexivity, where students' emotions become a medium through which they engage with broader societal concerns. Mrs Thomas provided an example of this during our interview,

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reinforcing how Forum Theatre allowed her students to critically reflect on their digital actions and develop a stronger sense of community responsibility.

I identified problem-solving among the students when conducting Forum Theatre.

There was a group that ignored one friend by having their chat. The friend who was being isolated later found out, and it resulted in an issue. We used Forum Theatre to try and work out how we would resolve the issue. Through Forum Theatre and playing the issue of someone not being respected by the rest of the friendship group, we were able to talk about the issue. (I-PSS)

In Mrs Thomas's class, performing these scenarios gave students a tangible way to address and resolve conflicts. By stepping into the roles and experiencing the emotions and dynamics firsthand, they could better understand the complexities of social interactions and develop empathy for others. This approach helped them find practical solutions and fostered a deeper sense of community and collective responsibility.

Both Mr Simon's and Mrs Thomas's experiences illustrate how drama pedagogy can shift the focus from individual to community, promoting a broader understanding of digital citizenship. By providing students with the autonomy to explore issues and the tools to address them collaboratively, I noted how these teachers enabled their students to develop essential skills for navigating the digital world. This approach reflects Boal's (1979) emphasis on empowering participants through collective action and collaboration in participatory theatre. Combining autonomous exploration with community-focused problem-solving through drama techniques like Forum Theatre has proven a powerful approach to understanding digital citizenship.

Upon reflection, I recall the students at Madike High School pausing during their focus group to think about how they considered the results of problem-solving through drama, which sometimes contrasted with the views of their teachers. The students recognised that drama pedagogy had improved their ability to develop solutions to problems; however, they also

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noted that they sometimes felt that the scenarios were somewhat detached from real-life situations they might experience.

Mulan was one of the students who considered and offered a more critical problem-solving perspective. "We had this exercise where we had situations and then tried to resolve them within a few frames. We started a situation that we resolved by the end. I remember looking at some of them and thinking this would not be realistic as it would not happen in real life. I could not see how someone who was being excluded or being bullied ended up being friends with the bullies" (FG-PSS).

Rapunzel, another student, immediately jumped in to support this statement, discussing how, at times, the resolutions often seemed overly optimistic. "Solutions that might seem ideal may not be realistic. As Mulan said, at the end of a whole cyberbullying thing, it is unlikely that individuals will end up being friends. They might be on friendly terms but not friends. It is a closer outcome to the actual, but it might not be the exact one we want. Yeah. The drama helped us think it is more of a band-aid fix sometimes than finding the solution." (FG-PSS) By this, Rapunzel meant that while drama activities brought attention to issues and offered temporary solutions, they often felt superficial and did not fully address the deeper, underlying problems. This reflects what Boal (1979) describes as 'magic', where performance moments appear to resolve conflict but ultimately reinforce the illusion of fixed realities. Instead of accepting these outcomes as inevitable, the Joker challenges assumptions and encourages participants to question whether alternative solutions exist (Schutzman, 2019). In this context, the student's recognition of band-aid fixes signals an emerging critical awareness, acknowledging that some resolutions in drama, much like online, can feel conclusive without addressing the complexity of underlying social issues. Despite these criticisms, the students found that the drama activities provided a valuable framework for understanding personal and social dynamics. While the scenarios might have seemed idealised, working through these issues helped them reflect on their interactions and relationships. Mulan followed up her previous statement and reflected, "This topic did help

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us understand how to deal with more personal situations within our social circle" (FG-PSS). Rapunzel then outlined her appreciation for exploring potential resolutions regarding the permanence of online actions. "It shows us how these situations can unfold and how anything we say, do or post online is probably forever going to be online. When we participate in drama, we can think of many solutions or multiple right answers" (FG-PSS).

Through engagement in drama, both students realised that while not all solutions are feasible, the creative process itself is valuable, allowing for the exploration of various approaches to problem-solving.

During the focus group at Montawl High School, I noted how students shared their experiences with similar enthusiasm. They described activities that enabled them to act out scenarios, such as social media conflicts, allowing them to explore different perspectives and potential solutions to issues, thus enhancing their problem-solving capabilities. Unlike the students at Madike High School, the Montawl High School students felt that these activities provided practical ways to solve conflicts rather than just temporary fixes. They remarked that drama increased their awareness and empowered them to stand up for others, fostering the development and application of problem-solving skills and leaving a positive impact. Caterina reflected on one particular activity, saying, "One of the activities I was thinking of was when we were acting out a social media sort of conflict. It was interesting to see how other people perceived and could end that conflict" (FG-PSS).

Evie added that the Forum Theatre technique, where students tapped in and out during the activity, made her more aware of where she could step in during conflicts if there were arguments in her life. She explained, "When we were doing, like, the tapping in and out activity, it made me more aware of, like, where I could step in during conflict if there were arguments in my life" (FG-PSS), emphasising the practical application of this method in real-life situations. Students like Evie were better able to express their thoughts clearly and apply conflict resolution strategies through the active dialogue between participants, helping them

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practice communication skills in the controlled yet flexible drama space (Jefferson & Anderson, 2017; Orlovich, 2024).

Another critical aspect the students discussed was the influence of online interactions and how drama activities reinforced the need to take action in digital spaces. Carolyn elaborated on this by sharing her experience witnessing rude or mean behaviour online. She explained,

If someone was being rude or saying something mean to someone I know, my friends, or just in general, I feel like I would be more inclined to step in because I am seeing it happen, and I know I can do something. Online, you see a lot of negative posts and comments, which is so common that you do not feel like even if you did something, it would help, but I kind of realise that even if it is just a comment or recording, it can actually help someone and have an effect. (FG-PSS)

Carolyn's insight highlighted how drama activities made students more aware of their role in face-to-face conflicts and online interactions. This reinforces the value of taking action and its potential to make a meaningful impact on someone's life. Her reflections demonstrate the essential role of drama activities in fostering students' skill development. By actively engaging in scenarios that mirrored real-life conflicts, students become more aware of their ability to intervene. Additionally, they enhance their communication, empathy, and problem-solving skills. As a result, this skill development equips them to navigate complex social situations more effectively, both offline and online, and encourages a proactive stance in making positive contributions to their communities.

6.2 Empathy Development and Teacher Insights

Drama pedagogy can enhance students' understanding of citizenship within a human-centered online world by fostering both skills and attributes essential for digital engagement. While the previous sections focused on skill development, such as problem-solving, critical thinking, and empathy, this section highlights the personal attributes that students cultivated through drama, including responsibility, self-awareness, and ethical awareness. These

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attributes complement the skills developed and together form a comprehensive foundation for navigating the digital world.

In the interviews, teachers consistently highlighted the role that drama pedagogy played in enriching digital citizenship education. They shared numerous examples of how implementing various drama techniques and approaches fostered growth in their students' skills and attributes. Some techniques they discussed were relevant for classroom activities related to analysing plays, engaging in playbuilding, reimagining scenes, and creating promotional materials. Throughout these discussions, it became clear that the u.b.do unit not only deepened students' understanding of digital citizenship but also actively promoted the development of essential skills like critical thinking and digital literacy (ISTE, 2016). Additionally, it cultivated key personal attributes such as empathy, ethical awareness, and self-reflection. All four teachers recognised these advancements as indispensable for students to navigate the digital world effectively and responsibly and recognised the direct link between drama pedagogy and the comprehensive development of students as adept digital citizens.

During my interview with Ms Skye, she provided valuable insights into her cohort's engagement with drama activities. She explained how her students reimagined scenes, created posters, and designed promotional materials to explore digital citizenship concepts.

In this cohort, we looked at scenes and tried to reimagine them. Plus, they created a poster and promotional design to help them get ideas about digital citizenship and what that play was about. I think that their prior knowledge and, you know, obviously discussing ideas and their individual experience has helped them. When I was introducing the unit to them, I specifically said that we were looking at it from a practitioner's point of view. Last year, we looked at a play that is one form of studying the issues of digital citizenship. This time, we are going to explore it through our own

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play-building experiences and look specifically at a practitioner who will improve their digital citizenship. (I-SAD)⁵⁷

Allowing students to draw from their prior knowledge and personal experiences created a stronger connection to the material and increased their engagement in meaningful ways. This was evident through their participation in discussions and drama exercises, where students regularly referenced their own digital experiences when exploring citizenship topics. For instance, in the u.b.do lessons I observed on digital interactions, students were asked to develop scenes that reflected real-world online challenges, such as cyberbullying, digital laws, security, or privacy concerns. *Metaxis* (Boal, 1979), where students exist between reality and fiction, was particularly relevant here. Through the scenes, students used personal reflections that simultaneously enhanced their performances and their understanding of digital citizenship. The drama pedagogy created a space where students could critically examine their online behaviour, fostering ethical engagement with digital issues (Bhukhanwala, 2014).

By examining digital citizenship through a practitioner's lens, Ms Skye's students gained a more nuanced understanding of the subject, which she found particularly compelling. This was demonstrated when students critically examined the roles of bystanders and perpetrators in online conflicts during Forum Theatre exercises, moving beyond a simplistic view of right and wrong. I observed this during some Forum Theatre exercises when the students critically examined the roles of bystanders and perpetrators in online conflicts. Rather than simply identifying right or wrong actions, they reflected on the emotional and social complexities involved, illustrating their ability to see beyond the surface of digital interactions. For example, one student commented on how online conflicts often involve misinterpretations, highlighting the need for more thoughtful responses. This shift from a basic understanding to a more reflective and layered approach to digital citizenship reflects

⁵⁷ I indicates data drawn from teacher interviews. SAD refers to the theme Skills and Attributes Development.

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the critical thinking processes described by Freebody and O'Connor (2022), where drama encourages students to grapple with the complexity of social interactions in a way that enhances both empathy and analytical skills.

Another insightful perspective came from Mrs Elsa, who described how drama pedagogy creates a 'learn by doing' environment that nurtures student skills and attributes. She highlighted the role of the spect-actor in drama, emphasising how this involvement empowers students to step into the narrative actively, either as participants or observers, facilitating a dynamic learning experience. She said, "That is the benefit of having the pedagogy embedded in the process. They [students] will become familiar with how to step up, show, and then reflect and respond. The fact that it is the spect-actor invitation means you have permission to engage. I think there is plenty in the unit that will continually invite them to be stakeholders, whether they are audience members or actors" (I-SAD).

Mr Simon shared his observations on the effectiveness of drama pedagogy in enhancing students' understanding and application of digital safety and broader digital citizenship principles. He explained how the drama activities encouraged students to explore these concepts more deeply, saying, "I think, particularly, listening to their answers provides a good perspective of their skills and understanding of not just digital safety but also digital citizenship. I think the course really offered an avenue to explore how to be safe and the impact of their actions on the wider world" (I-SAD). His reflections highlight the value of listening to students, and in drama, where their perspectives are more openly shared, enabling a more interactive and responsive learning process.

Drama pedagogy created a space where teachers could actively listen to students, engaging with their perspectives in real time. Jefferson and Anderson (2017) suggest that collaboration in drama invites students to negotiate meaning among themselves, creating richer learning outcomes as teachers respond to the ideas and reflections students offer. This real-time responsiveness allows teachers to adapt their facilitation to the specific needs and insights of the group, making student voice central to the learning process. Teachers

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moved from being sole authorities to co-learners who guide the learning based on student contributions. Gallagher and Jacobson (2018) also shows that drama's participatory nature promotes deeper social understanding, as the collaborative activities require students to critically engage with social issues and interpersonal dynamics. Through these interactions, students express their understanding, and teachers adjust the learning to reflect the evolving perspectives of the group. This dynamic relationship is essential for meaningful engagement with complex topics like citizenship and digital safety, where student voices influence the learning direction.

Drama classes position students as key contributors to the learning process, and teachers, in turn, listen and respond to those contributions. This approach strengthened student engagement and deepened learning, as teachers facilitated rather than direct the process, responding to students' lived experiences. As students reflected on their experiences with digital safety, teachers could draw on those reflections to guide discussions and adjust the drama exercises to address the perspectives and needs raised by the students (Gallagher & Jacobson, 2018; Jefferson & Anderson, 2017).

The students at Lupaw High School also reflected on their improved understanding and application of digital safety. Their reflections indicated a strengthened ability to understand and assess online situations, which demonstrated the impact of the drama pedagogy on their critical thinking skills. They described how they felt the drama exercises mirrored real-world digital interactions, allowing them to consider and manage their reactions and actions with greater care and thoughtfulness. Students connected this improvement in discernment and self-control to the skills developed throughout the unit, where drama offered opportunities to navigate ethical decision-making and responsible behaviour. The participatory nature of drama, as described by O'Connor and Freebody (2022), allowed students to reflect critically on their own perspectives while engaging with real-world digital challenges. This aligns with the idea that citizenship, particularly in digital spaces, is inherently participatory and required active engagement and reflection on one's role in

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society. Through drama, students were able to apply these reflective practices to their online interactions, fostering a more thoughtful and responsible approach to digital citizenship.

Cora shared her thoughts related to this, saying, "Now, I can read the situation better online, and I can know what to say, what not to say, or leave it alone. I now know when to stop and read things better" (FG-SAD). Her words highlighted how drama activities had sharpened her critical thinking, enabling her to make more informed decisions in digital contexts. Jake reflected on thinking before posting online, recognising how digital interactions require careful consideration to avoid negative consequences. He explained, "I now understand that one shouldn't post anything without thinking about it because there will be repercussions, like getting banned on Snapchat or hurting a good friend's feelings" (FG-SAD). At the beginning of this unit, Jake had shared a story about getting banned from Snapchat (O-SAD), a negative event in his life. This dramatic change, illustrating his growth, showed how drama exercises instilled a sense of responsibility and awareness about the consequences of online actions, marking a notable moment in the research.

Cassie also about how the lessons had improved her self-control. She said, "I believe that from the classes and learning about social media, I have started to be a bit more self-controlled with what I say to certain people or put out onto the internet." (FG-SAD). This response is a representation of how drama supports students to exercise self-restraint and thoughtful communication in the digital landscape.

Moving on to my observations at Madike High School, I noted that students also experienced shifts in their understanding of internet use and digital citizenship. During the focus group discussions, they shared how the teaching and learning unit motivated them to actively reflect on their internet usage for socialisation and school work. This reflection enhanced their grasp of digital ethics and responsibility. Through engaging in exercises from Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979), students problem-solved real-world digital issues they had experienced or witnessed, employing creative problem-solving to cultivate a broad range of skills and attributes. These skills include navigating complex online scenarios with empathy,

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creativity, critical thinking, and the confidence to make decisions grounded in ethical awareness.

The students also highlighted additional skills and attributes fostered by drama pedagogy, such as collaboration, effective communication, and an increased sense of responsibility, especially regarding the impact of their actions on others. Boal's exercises encouraged students to develop understanding, practical skills, and empathy, fostering a stronger sense of responsibility in their digital presence.

Jasmine discussed how drama reinforced responsible online behaviour, explaining how abstract ethical guidelines became more concrete through the drama. "Drama improved my skills and attributes because we have been told not to cyberbully and not be mean pretty much our entire lives. We are taught not to search for things that you would not want your grandma to see you looking up. I worked through these things in drama and got to do playbuilding exercises with everyone else in the class. Solidified them in our minds, or at least in mine" (FG-SAD).

Rose added to Jasmine's perspective on understanding and applying their school's digital conduct in a new way. "I was able to understand the digital code of conduct, whereas, in previous discussions, it was more surface-level in that they did not tell us why we were doing certain things. Most people can understand the reason why, but then it is harder to translate it into actual situations. In contrast, in drama, we explored the different examples of situations where this could be useful" (FG-SAD). This highlighted how drama provided practical contexts for digital ethics, making theoretical concepts more applicable in real-life situations.

Moana followed this reflecting on how the visual elements of the work helped her and other students grasp the consequences of irresponsible online behaviour more effectively. "In our drama class, we were able to see it digital citizenship visually, and I think most people are visual learners. We understand it now, and it is something that we know. Everyone knows

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you should be a responsible person online and not cause any harm. I think examples are important because, throughout this unit, we have explored the consequences and emotional impact of what happens when we act irresponsibly. When we are told not to do this or do not do that, we cannot see the repercussions and ramifications of what happens if we were to do that" (FG-SAD). Her reflection revealed how experiential learning, mainly through enacting and visually experiencing digital scenarios in collaborative drama activities, helped students internalise the ethical consequences of online behaviour. This approach is reinforced by Gardner and Davis's (2013) work on fostering critical ethical awareness through immersive and interactive learning experiences. It also demonstrated how experiential learning in drama provided a deeper and more immersive way to explore responsible decision-making in real-world digital dilemmas, aligning with the participatory and problem-solving approaches highlighted in Mattson's research (2017).

Jasmine further discussed the impact of the problem-solving and critical thinking during through the u.b.do unit, adding, "The topics that we explored in drama helped us go through how to make solutions for these problems. So, it was not just preventing the problem; it was coming together and trying to make solutions, such as how to help a victim of cyberbullying and not be a bystander and do something, and although it has been mentioned, and I agree that they are a bit, you know, a bit unrealistic, it is a bit like a utopian solution. Like it's not going to go so smoothly, but it is more about acknowledging that there are solutions to these problems rather than just saying do not do it, you cannot do it, or this cannot happen. This topic helped us go through what we should do" (FG-SAD). Jasmine's insights reveal her improved ability to actively seek solutions instead of just focussing on ways of preventing them from occurring. While she acknowledges that some of these solutions might feel idealised or "*utopian*", the focus is not solely on achieving perfect outcomes but on encouraging students to critically engage with complex online challenges and find ways to intervene constructively. In line with Bhukhanwala's (2014) findings, which illustrate how Boal's methods can foster problem-solving and empathy by allowing students to rehearse

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responses to social issues, these insights collectively show that students are developing critical thinking and ethical reasoning skills, essential for navigating the nuances of online interactions with a sense of agency and responsibility (ISTE, 2016).

In the Montawl High School focus group, one student specifically outlined that they gained realisation and awareness for online interactions, which improved their adaptability in balancing the human-centred and online spaces. Shirley reflected on how drama improved her ability to interact with people online, a crucial skill as a blended citizen. Shirley's comment, "It was more like a realisation thing. I now understand how to interact with people online," (FG-SAD), demonstrates an increased self-awareness, one of the initial competencies for responsible digital interaction. Drama pedagogy, through its emphasis on embodiment and reflection, appears to have facilitated a shift from passive engagement to conscious reflection on how students behave and communicate online. This process of critical reflection, particularly within the immersive and interactive nature of digital drama activities, is noted for cultivating digital citizenship competencies, as also highlighted by Zakopoulos et al. (2023b), where digital technologies in drama-based education enhance ethical responsibility and self-awareness among students.

In the Tedrain High School focus group, Nia revealed how drama pedagogy allowed her to enhance her understanding of online advocacy, as well as her confidence and empathy. Online advocacy, that she is referring to, is the capacity to support others in digital environments, especially in defending others subjected to bullying or negative comments. This ability to intervene on behalf of others showcases empathy, understanding and sharing the feelings of those targeted, and a sense of confidence in making a positive difference. Nia expressed this, saying, "I am now able to stand up for people online more. I will be scrolling through TikTok, and then I see mean comments. I now help the person being bullied by leaving a positive response. Drama has helped me gain that confidence" (FG-SAD). Nia's reflection shows how drama pedagogy was not only teaching students about their own online behaviour but also instilling the confidence to act on behalf of others in digital spaces.

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This growth in online advocacy reflected the development of empathy, which is integral to responsible digital citizenship. Her experience, like Shirley's, demonstrates the transition from passive observation to active, ethical participation in online communities. This is consistent with the claim that drama promotes empathy and critical thinking, fostering a participatory approach to digital citizenship (O'Connor & Freebody, 2022).

Nia's reflection showed how drama pedagogy is not only teaching students about their own online behaviour but also instilling the confidence to act on behalf of others in online spaces. This growth in online advocacy reflects the development of empathy, a key component of digital citizenship. Nia's experience, like Shirley's, demonstrates the transition from passive observation to active, ethical participation in online communities, reflecting a broader understanding of digital citizenship as engaging in responsible and empathetic online behaviour (Öztürk, 2021).

The group echoed these discussions, highlighting the influence of drama pedagogy in developing students' competence to advocate for their peers online, enriching their empathy and self-confidence. Gardner and Davis (2013) also emphasise that participatory, experiential learning helps students internalise social responsibility in digital contexts, reinforcing ethical engagement in online communities. This collective understanding of digital advocacy aligns with broader goals of fostering proactive and ethical digital citizenship through drama pedagogy, providing students with the tools to reflect on, adapt, and influence their online interactions positively.

6.3 Engaging and Identifying Digital Citizenship Themes

The u.b.do program was designed to "develop knowledge, skills, and an understanding of playbuilding through structured scenarios of online situations as proactive digital citizens" (NSW Department of Education, 2019b), emphasising 'exploring through doing.' During this section, I will discuss how students were not passively learning about digital citizenship during the unit but actively engaged in theoretical and practical aspects. Through my

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observations, interviews, and focus groups, it became clear that students themselves identified several concepts of digital citizenship as they participated in Boalian learning activities. These concepts were Identity, Interactions with Others, Individual Actions (both positive and negative), and Cyber Hygiene. Each concept represents a fundamental aspect of digital citizenship, drawing from established frameworks (ISTE, 2016; Mattson, 2016, 2017; Ribble, 2015) and student reflections throughout this study. Their recognition of these concepts reflected the program's role in promoting critical engagement with digital citizenship themes.

For instance, students reflected on their online identities, discussing how they presented themselves and perceived others in digital spaces. They examined their interactions with others, considering the impact of their behaviour on their peers. Individual actions, whether positive or negative, were scrutinised, leading to deeper insights into the consequences of their online choices. Finally, cyber hygiene focussed on safe and responsible internet use.

These concepts provided a scaffold for understanding digital citizenship and highlighted why the students' engagement was sustained, meaningful, and impactful. By embedding the concepts into the drama activities, students could internalise and apply what they learned in a way that resonated with their daily digital experiences.

As I analyse these findings, I will illustrate how each concept emerged from the students' experiences and how the Boalian learning approach facilitated a deeper understanding of digital citizenship.

Identified Digital Citizenship Themes

The students' engagement with digital citizenship concepts became apparent through various activities and reflections. Each theme emerged organically as students participated in the Boal learning activities, offering a window into their evolving understanding.

Identity

I first identified the concept of Identity through data derived from both Lupaw and Madike High School.

At Lupaw High School, Ms Skye initially engaged students in a discussion centred around Augusto Boal's Invisible Theatre. She began a particular lesson with a question to spark curiosity and critical thinking: "Who has heard of Boal before? Anyone? Okay, who has heard of the term Invisible Theatre? Can you tell me what you think it might be?" (O-AE) To sustain the students' engagement, Ms Skye continued to delve into Boal's methodology and facilitate a discussion of Identity in digital contexts by asking, "Can anyone describe what makes Boal's approach to theatre unique?" (O-AE)

This led to an engaging activity where Ms Skye guided the students in creating character profiles, highlighting the discrepancies between a student's real-life characteristics and online personas. She introduced the concept of Invisible Theatre by asking, "*How might Boal's concept of the 'Invisible Theatre' apply to how we present ourselves on social media?*" (O-AE) As the students had not developed an understanding of this before now, it provided a unique opportunity to explore and embody contrasting roles. Invisible Theatre, in this context, was used by the teacher to highlight how people can behave and identify as another character online, like how actors could blend into everyday scenes unnoticed when performing intentionally through a piece of Invisible Theatre.

As the unit progressed, Ms Skye would refer to Identity in various reflection activities through questions such as, "What did you learn about yourself through this exercise? How do Boal's techniques help us uncover the potential impacts of our online behaviour?" (O-AE)

In another lesson at Lupaw High School, students engaged in roleplaying activities to explore the fluidity of online identities. Ms Skye encouraged students to reflect on this dynamic by asking, "How does your online persona differ from your real-life identity, and what influences your portrayal online?" (O-AE) I observed a similar approach at Madike High

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School. Mrs Elsa asked the students to playbuild a series of digital stories expressing their personal experiences of their regular engagement with technology. She guided the students with probing questions such as, "How do the characters in your story reflect different aspects of your identity?" (O-AE), prompting them to critically evaluate how their online actions reflect their values and personalities.

While the students recognised the differences between their online personas and real-life identities, this exploration uncovered deeper insights. The roleplaying activities enabled the students to confront the fluid nature of identity in digital spaces, reflecting on how their self-presentation online shifts based on external influences and expectations (Ali et al., 2023). This engagement aligns with Darr and Doss's (2022) research on 'context collapse'⁵⁸, which shows how teenagers maintain multiple identities across different platforms to navigate social expectations. In these drama activities, students mirrored this experience, examining the consequences of their digital actions and representations while navigating the contrast between their public and private selves (Darr & Doss, 2022).

The students I observed at all four research sites left the classroom with a comprehensive understanding of their identities as human-centred digital citizens through the reflective and experiential learning opportunities their engagement with drama pedagogy provided.

Interactions with Others

I identified this concept through various activities reflective of real-life digital scenarios, which challenged students to reflect on social interactions, online and offline. At Madike High School, Mrs Elsa prompted a discussion and playbuilding exercise with her class based on the prompt of sharing another student's photo without their permission. She prompted critical thinking through questions like, "What's going on here? What do you think about this situation from their perspective?" (O-AE) These discussions engaged students and

⁵⁸ Context collapse refers to the blending of different social contexts or audiences in online spaces.

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highlighted the emotional nuances and potential misunderstandings inherent in digital interactions.

Mrs Elsa also led a class discussion on how online actions can represent grassroots activism and community-led efforts to bring about social change. She asked students to consider what happens when people misunderstand these actions online. For example, people might view a campaign meant to spread awareness on an issue as offensive or controversial due to different viewpoints. She posed questions like, "What might it mean if it's grassroots activism and social change?" (O-AE) to get students thinking about the broader effects of their behaviour online. This discussion aimed to help students understand that what they post online can be interpreted in many ways by different people.

During an observation at Montawl High School, Mr Simon guided students in developing performances on appropriate online communication. Through reflective discussions, he asked, "What are the key components of respectful online communication, and why are they important?" (O-AE) This activity encouraged collaboration and allowed students to unpack and articulate principles of respectful digital interactions with each other. Mr Simon then challenged the students with additional questions such as, "What ethical considerations arise when sharing information online?" (O-AE) and "How should you interact with others' posts or personal information?" (O-AE) These questions were instrumental in helping students grasp the complexities of ethical behaviour in digital environments.

In the following lesson, the focus shifted to Montawl High School, with Mr Simon encouraging students to consider the impact of their interactions by asking, "How did your choices affect other characters in your scene?" (O, AE) and "What are the consequences of these interactions?" (O-AE) These questions guided students through reflective exercises that unpacked the consequences of their digital behaviours. By critically examining their roles and actions, students began to see how small, seemingly insignificant online interactions can ripple into broader social consequences. Gardner and Davis (2013), suggest that participatory learning, such as these reflective exercises, fosters a deeper

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engagement with social responsibility by immersing students in scenarios where they must consider the impacts of their actions on others.

Across all four schools, students developed a comprehensive understanding of the complexities of digital interactions, with each reflective practice reinforcing their critical awareness of how their behaviours could lead to misinterpretations or conflicts. As Stephen and Henrietta (2018), argue, deep reflective practices are essential for students to navigate the layered nature of digital interactions, especially when addressing online conflicts and ethical considerations. Through drama, they learned to navigate the ethical implications and value of respectful engagement in digital spaces, becoming more mindful digital citizens. By effectively educating students on principles such as respect through the curriculum from Kindergarten to higher education, digital awareness among students will develop more thoroughly (Curran & Ribble, 2017).

Individual Actions - Positive or Negative

I identified this concept when students explored the consequences of personal behaviours in digital contexts, emphasising each individual's responsibility in shaping online interactions.

At Montawi High School, Mr Simon used Forum Theatre to engage students in active reflection of their online actions, facilitating the direction of a scene on how their behaviours could oppress others and make positive change online. He asked questions like, "How can people be oppressed online? Do you think there are ways that you can encourage people to be more positive in their online experiences?" (O-AE) The Forum Theatre scene and reflective questions encouraged students to think constructively about how they could foster more positive online interactions.

Mr Simon's approach was very similar to that of Mrs Elsa at Madike High School, who also made students aware of their influence in the digital space and stressed the role of individual responsibility through Forum Theatre. Students explored the complexities of cyberbullying, and she challenged them with questions such as, "How might your actions change the outcome of this scene?" (O-AE) and "What positive actions could lead to a better ending?"

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(O-AE) In response to these questions, students began to offer alternative endings, showing a deeper understanding of the consequences of their digital actions. For example, in one group discussion, students suggested specific positive actions, offering help to support a friend to find a better and more positive resolution (O-C, SAD, PSS). This demonstrated their growing awareness of how their actions could positively or negatively contribute to their role as blended citizens.

Students at all four schools explored the concepts of digital footprints and tattoos. In week 4, Mrs Elsa initiated a discussion to help students understand the permanence of their online actions by asking, "Is the term 'digital footprint' a sufficient metaphor for our online presence, or does 'digital tattoo' better describe the lasting impact of our online actions?" (O-AE). She continued, "How do your online actions contribute to your digital tattoo, and what long-term impacts could these have?" (O-AE) This discussion made the idea of a digital tattoo tangible. It prompted students to reflect on the long-term consequences of their actions as digital citizens, recognising that every action carries the potential to permanently affect personal and public perceptions. As Leigh Anne Howard (2004) suggests, Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979) can empower students to develop a critical understanding of their behaviours in real-life contexts, fostering reflection and social transformation. In this context, students were encouraged to confront the reality of their digital actions and their enduring impact on their digital identities and the broader online community. I observed several students vocalising realisations about the permanence of their online behaviours. One said, "I never thought about how what I do online stays there forever, like a tattoo. It makes me think twice before I post something" (O-AE, EPDC). Another student noted, "It's like leaving a mark on who I am, and that can follow me" (O-AE, EPDC). These realisations demonstrated how the students were internalising the idea of long-term consequences and how their actions affect both their own digital identity and the wider online community.

Through these activities, students developed a comprehensive understanding of their individual impact on the digital world. They began to recognise the impact of their positive

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and negative actions and how these shape the broader online environment. Their reflections and discussions showed increasing responsibility for their behaviour, as they aimed to create a more positive and respectful digital community. Just as Balme (2022) suggested, drama in this instance, played a pivotal role in fostering active citizenship, empowering the students to engage with their social environment in a more thoughtful and responsible manner.

Cyber Hygiene

Cyber hygiene encompasses digital safety, privacy, wellbeing, and responsibility, as this research defines through interactions with teachers and students.

At Tedrain High School, Mrs Thomas initiated activities on cyber hygiene, linking games and exercises to online privacy and consent. Questions like, "What do you think the purpose of that game was?" (O-AE), sparked curiosity and engaged the students in problem-solving, connecting their drama experience to online experiences related to providing information to strangers online.

Additionally, topics like recognising cyber threats, such as phishing attempts, came up in class discussions, which is critical to maintaining online safety. Mrs Elsa at Madike High School facilitated an exploration where her students playbuilt scenes that depicted potential cyber-attacks like phishing. She challenged students to identify suspicious elements by asking, "How can you protect yourself and others from such threats?" (O-AE). These exercises taught students to recognise and respond to online concerns effectively. After performances on this topic at each school, the reflection discussions were vital in consolidating students' learning about cyber hygiene. These conversations allowed students to articulate their understanding of concepts like consent and privacy, supporting their awareness of how to protect personal information and engage respectfully with others online.

Through the observations, focus groups, and the concepts of digital citizenship, students engaged throughout this teaching and learning program in Identity, interactions with others,

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individual actions (positive or negative), and cyber hygiene. Each concept represents a fundamental aspect of digital citizenship, repeatedly identified for exploration throughout the program and supporting the argument that the students' engagement remained sustained and meaningful.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined how integrating digital citizenship education in drama fostered students' skill development and ethical understanding. It highlights how drama activities enhance problem-solving abilities, critical thinking, empathy, and awareness of digital citizenship principles. The following table categorises these learning outcomes into three areas: key skills, competencies, and digital concepts, reflecting the depth of students' engagement with digital citizenship.

Table 6.1

Key Skills, Competencies, and Digital Concepts Developed Through Drama Pedagogy

Key Skills	Key Competencies	Digital Concepts
Problem-solving skills: Through the drama activities, students were able to identify, analyse, and solve complex issues.	Ethical awareness: Understanding and applying ethical principles in digital and real-world interactions.	Identity: Students reflected on how they present themselves and perceive others in digital spaces, understanding the fluidity of online identities.
Autonomy: Students demonstrated increased confidence and independence in exploring and addressing digital and social challenges.	Digital literacy: Comprehensive capability involving digital tools, understanding digital ethics, and maintaining online safety.	Interactions with Others: Students explored the impact of their behaviour on peers and the need for respectful and ethical engagement online.
Empathy: Drama pedagogy helped students understand and consider the feelings of others, fostering a stronger sense of empathy.	Community engagement: Recognising the role of collective actions and empathy in addressing digital and social issues.	Individual Actions: Students recognised the positive and negative consequences of their online actions.
Critical thinking and reflection: Students improved their ability to think critically about digital interactions and ethical considerations,		Cyber Hygiene: Understanding the principles of online safety, privacy, and responsible behaviour.

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engaging in meaningful reflections.		
Collaboration and communication: Drama encouraged effective communication and teamwork among students.		
Self-control and responsibility: Students recognised the need for self-restraint and responsible decision-making.		

The chapter also discussed the critical role the teachers played in facilitating the development of students' understanding of digital citizenship through drama pedagogy.

Rather than focusing solely on the students' actions, I have evidenced how teachers actively guided students in reflecting on and understanding the ethical and social dimensions of their online interactions. As Piceci, Mariani, and Peluso Cassese (2021) note, teachers are pivotal in translating digital competencies into meaningful learning experiences that resonate with students' real-world online behaviours. In this context, the teachers fostered a learning environment where students could actively reflect, engage, and internalise the principals of digital citizenship.

By structuring lessons around Boal's participatory drama techniques, the teachers provided a space for students to explore the complexities of individual and community responsibility in digital interactions. As Gallagher and Jacobson (2018) emphasise, drama's participatory nature offers a unique avenue for students to practice empathy and collaborative problem-solving, both essential for navigating digital and social challenges. These teacher-guided activities allowed students to shift their focus from isolated actions to understanding the broader social implications of their behaviours.

Additionally, Radovanovic (2024) outlines how building critical digital literacy requires more than technical skills and demands a reflective, ethical approach to participation in digital spaces. Through the drama pedagogy evidenced in this chapter, teachers were integral in guiding students toward this deeper and critical engagement with human-centred and digital

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spaces. This facilitation was about building skills and encouraging students to see themselves as active, responsible members of a broader blended community.

The next chapter will reflect on the overall impact of integrating drama pedagogy within digital citizenship education, capturing overarching evaluations and drawing connections between the transformative potential of drama and the practical application of digital citizenship concepts.

7 Impact and Reflections

Reflecting on this study's findings, integrating digital citizenship education through drama pedagogy has a notable impact on students and teachers. This final chapter of the findings explores the overall impact of integrating drama pedagogy within digital citizenship education, focusing on capturing the overarching evaluations and reflections and drawing connections between the potential of drama and the practical application of digital citizenship concepts.

This chapter addresses several key research questions. Firstly, it examines how teachers in NSW interpret, understand, and approach digital citizenship, including how their knowledge and understanding of digital citizenship evolves throughout the teaching and learning program. Secondly, it investigates how drama pedagogy can impact students' understanding of citizenship in a human-centred world. This includes exploring how students change their interactions with others and how they reflect upon triggers, techniques, or strategies that may negatively or positively affect their wellbeing. Lastly, the chapter looks into the dynamics of teacher-student interactions within the classroom environment when participating in Drama, focusing on the engagement levels with the curriculum-aligned approach to digital citizenship.

This chapter synthesises the comprehensive effects observed throughout the study, highlighting the growth in students' skills, competencies, and understanding of key digital concepts. It also connects these findings to existing literature and the study's methodology, outlining the role of drama pedagogy in fostering responsible digital citizenship.

Building on the earlier chapters, this section revisits how drama activities further develop students' problem-solving abilities, empathy, critical thinking, and collaboration, while deepening their ethical awareness, digital literacy, and understanding of community engagement. Here, I emphasise how these competencies are consolidated and reflected upon in new contexts, showing progression and refinement as students engage with various

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triggers, techniques, and strategies throughout drama activities. The analysis also considers the cumulative positive and negative impacts of these activities on students' wellbeing.

These skills and competencies remain essential for navigating the blended world effectively and responsibly, but here, they are revisited with a focus on sustained engagement and application.

7.1 Responsible Use of Technology and Digital Platforms

In the final weeks of the teaching and learning program, the student responses to classroom activities and reflective discussions indicated that their understanding of digital citizenship had developed to include more nuanced concepts, such as the ethical implications of online behaviour and safeguarding personal information and privacy concerns. These insights emerged as students engaged in classroom discussions and responded to teacher questions, demonstrating an increased awareness of their digital responsibilities. Reflecting on their learning during the program, all teachers also acknowledged an increased understanding of digital citizenship and their ability to facilitate classroom learning on this topic.

Ms Skye evolved throughout the teaching and learning program, guiding students in discussions about digital interactions. Her understanding of digital interactions deepened, and she became more adept at facilitating classroom discussions on the ethical implications of online behaviour. She focused on empowering students to make informed decisions online and encouraging active rather than passive digital participation. A key moment of reflection occurred during her interview when Ms Skye explained how she utilised Forum Theatre to facilitate discussions around real-life digital dilemmas. The goal was to equip students with the knowledge to navigate digital spaces thoughtfully, making choices such as blocking people or refraining from engaging in harmful online interactions, thereby fostering a safe and respectful digital environment.

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In her interview, Ms Skye reflected on her role, noting that she initially saw herself as someone who simply followed the syllabus: "My role as a teacher is basically to follow a syllabus, which I do. We look at the scope and sequence. We follow the units of work that are suitable for our students" (I, RUT). However, through the program, she began to recognise the deeper responsibilities of guiding students in digital citizenship. She explained that during playbuilding activities, it became her responsibility to help students "explore the posted words and images, enabling them to understand that they have choices, such as blocking a person or not taking part in the conversations" (I, RUT). This shift in perspective demonstrated Ms Skye's development from simply following pre-planned lessons to facilitating critical discussions about ethical decision-making in digital spaces. Her growing focus on helping students navigate their online interactions thoughtfully and responsibly reflected the evolving role of teachers, who, as research suggests, should increasingly guide students in ethical digital behaviour by addressing the social and psychological dimensions of digital citizenship (Ali et al., 2023).

Like Ms Skye, Mrs Elsa reflected on the concept of digital citizenship and her role as educators in imparting knowledge to students. She believed that being a responsible digital citizen goes beyond understanding how to use digital tools; it required an awareness of the impact of one's actions and a commitment to navigating the digital world with integrity and respect. She noted, "Promoting digital citizenship is a teacher's role, which involves guiding students to do right. In digital citizenship, ethics are embedded, as well as sensitive understanding and self-growth. So, being a digital citizen is important. Paying attention to your digital footprint or tattoo" (I-RUT). Her reflection aligned with broader discussions in digital citizenship literature, which frame ethical awareness and self-growth as central components of responsible digital behaviour in schools (Pangrazio & Sefton-Green, 2021; Ribble, 2015).

The need for ethical awareness and self-growth became increasingly evident during the pandemic, as students were required to transition to digital learning. Mrs Elsa commented on

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the urgency of suddenly needing to promote ethical digital citizenship, saying, "Even though your investigation might not have considered the COVID experience in its initiation, it certainly influenced us in promoting digital citizenship among students" (I-RUT). The rapid shift to digital platforms created not only new ethical challenges but also opportunities to reinforce the teaching of responsible online behaviour. As Piceci et al. (2021) observed, the COVID-19 pandemic rapidly forced the need for digital citizenship education, making it imperative for teachers to impart digital skills and foster critical awareness and ethical decision-making online. This research supports Mrs Elsa's reflection, demonstrating how the pandemic intensified the focus on ethical digital behaviour, aligning with my findings and observations of the evolving role of teachers in helping students navigate the complexities of digital spaces, during this time. It highlights the critical role of digital ethics in education and sets the foundation for understanding how teachers and students alike adapted to these challenges during a time of increased online engagement.

Consistent with Ms Skye and Mrs Elsa, Mr Simon reinforced the teacher's role in shaping students' understanding of digital citizenship. He advocated for a positive approach to digital citizenship, emphasising how building strong relationships with students allows for more effective differentiation of learning experiences to meet their needs. He reflected, "I believe in the science of teaching because I think it is incredibly important and helps establish relationships with the students. Teaching relies on knowing the students, what they are comfortable with, and being able to tease and draw things out. Without a relationship with the students, I do not think it would be as effective because learning digital citizenship requires an educator who knows them individually and can draw them out" (I-RUT). This reflection showed how the program helped Mr Simon recognise that effective digital citizenship education is not just about teaching rules, but about building strong, trusting relationships with students. Fostering ethical decision-making in students is closely tied to the relationships teachers establish, and research indicates that digital citizenship education

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thrives when grounded in positive relationships between teachers and students (Ali et al., 2023; Zembylas, 2022).

Mrs Thomas also saw the program as an opportunity to evolve her understanding of her role as a trusted adult and role model in students' lives, particularly in the context of navigating online spaces. While acknowledging her gaps in knowledge regarding emerging social media apps like TikTok, she recognised the value of her role in leading respectful discussions about online behaviour. She shared:

I am a bit out of the loop with TikTok and all those trends. So, things are going to happen in the online world that I will never understand, or I will be out of the loop. However, I think as teachers, we are role models. I think being able to lead these respectful discussions is important. As a teacher, we can monitor making sure that they are respectfully talking about their peers in the online, real, and drama world. It is important to improve the relationship between the students and teachers. I think students come to drama teachers to express their concerns and things that are happening at home or in their real lives at school. So, I think teachers are the trusted adults in these kids' lives. We are important in guiding these kids, but there will be things that we do not get. (I-RUT, CL)

Mrs Thomas's reflection acknowledges the challenge of staying current with rapidly changing digital trends like TikTok but reinforces her belief in the teacher's role as a guide. Leading respectful discussions became a central focus of her teaching approach, and the study helped her see how this responsibility extended into guiding students online and in their real-world behaviour. This aligned with research that emphasised the critical role of education in fostering responsible digital behaviour through open, respectful communication in the blended world, drawing on Boal's principles of dialogue and social responsibility (Pangrazio & Sefton-Green, 2021; Suzina & Tufte, 2020).

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Her perspective, that students often see Drama teachers as trusted adults reflects how the program encouraged her to recognise the unique role teachers play in helping students navigate ethical dilemmas online. This view aligns with Zembylas (2022) argument that teachers should guide their students through ethical challenges in the digital space and address the emotional or sensory barriers referred to as 'aesthetic injustice,' which can limit students' ability to engage with ethical issues. By fostering open, respectful discussions, Mrs Thomas was able to help students overcome these barriers, encouraging deeper engagement with ethical dilemmas, regardless of gaps in her own digital knowledge. Through Boal's methods, she empowered students to reflect on their digital actions more critically, allowing her better to guide them through the complexities of digital citizenship. This approach reinforced the relational trust necessary for students to navigate the blended world of ethical challenges effectively.

7.2 Boal Theatre

Building on the foundation of responsible digital citizenship, Boal's theatre techniques, particularly Forum, Image, and Invisible Theatre, were instrumental in deepening students' engagement and understanding of complex social dynamics in digital spaces. Across all four schools, I observed teachers and students co-creating and interacting through these methods. What emerged was a shared recognition of the need to align expectations between teachers and students, creating an educational environment conducive to exploring ethical dilemmas and societal issues (Neelands & Goode, 2000). This alignment fostered a rich collaborative atmosphere, essential for exploring sensitive themes such as online privacy, trolling, and digital etiquette.

7.2.1 Invisible Theatre

In all four schools, Invisible Theatre facilitated dynamic interactions staged to explore digital citizenship and the complexities of online behaviour. This method, rooted in social change (Boal, 1979), positions the teacher as both a facilitator and participant, allowing for an

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immersive learning experience. During a lesson at Montawl High School, Mr Simon employed Invisible Theatre to address the complexities of online trolling, offering students an opportunity to critically navigate challenges reflective of those they might encounter at various times in their lives. The strength of using Invisible Theatre lies in its ability to blur the lines between performance and reality, with students initially unaware they were engaging in a theatrical exercise and problem-solving as the drama unfolds.

In this instance, a student took on the role of an online troll, making inflammatory comments in a simulated online environment, while other students, unknowingly part of the performance, either passively observed or engaged as bystanders or victims. This unscripted interaction caused the majority of the unaware student audience to react authentically, hesitating initially but gradually becoming more assertive in challenging the 'troll.' Mr Simon's subtle facilitation ensured the scene unfolded naturally, encouraging students to draw connections between the theatrical situation and real-world online interactions (O-BT, C).

As the performance unfolded, I observed a clear transformation in student engagement. Those who were initially uncomfortable confronting the troll began to voice their opinions, shifting from passive observers to active participants advocating for responsible online behaviour. This highlighted the power of Invisible Theatre to foster critical digital citizenship by encouraging reflection and ethical decision-making. As students internalised these processes, they moved beyond passive observation toward more active participation in social discourse. Howard (2004) discusses how Invisible Theatre blurs the lines between performance and reality, prompting deep engagement with social and ethical issues. Kina and Fernandes's (2017) research supports this when outlining that by embodying both oppressor and oppressed roles, they are encouraged to critically reflect on power dynamics. This reflective process, as Schaedler (2010) notes, provoked the dialogue which challenged the participants to consider their responsibilities, as seen when becoming more aware of their digital behaviours.

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The fluidity of the roles in Invisible Theatre also mirrors the fluidity of potential digital interactions, where students could move between being bystanders, victims, or aggressors. By embodying multiple perspectives, they reflect critically on their own digital choices and the broader ethical implications of online behaviour. Bhukhanwala (2014) emphasises the role of Invisible Theatre here in cultivating empathy and critical thinking, skills that are essential for the students to learn how to navigate digital conflict. Mr Simon's guidance in scene, allowed students to internalise these lessons, connecting their reactions in the performance to their personal digital lives, fostering deeper self-awareness.

The teachers at all four research sites designed scenarios that mirrored real-life digital conflicts, immersing students in situations that required them to navigate complex social dynamics. The reflective dialogues that followed these performances were essential for providing students the opportunity to articulate the emotional and social impacts of their digital actions. This phase of reflection, always guided by the teacher, was critical in transforming the invisible performance into a moment of deep introspective learning. By embodying characters and roles reflective of their digital experiences, students developed a richer understanding of the consequences of their online actions. This deepened both cognitive and emotional engagement, as evidenced by their active participation in exploring the emotional weight of digital decisions (Bhukhanwala, 2014).

At Tedrain High School post-scenario discussions focused on issues of consent and privacy, with students reflecting on the implications of their actions. Mrs Thomas played a critical role in these discussions, ensuring that the classroom remained a psychologically safe space for open dialogue while guiding students through a critical analysis of their behaviour. This moment of reflection fostered deeper inquiry, allowing students to critically examine their responsibilities as digital citizens through the embodied roles they performed. The Invisible Theatre structure encouraged active involvement and critical engagement from students, which was essential for navigating the complexities of digital interactions (O-BT). It also supported the development of a psychologically safe and collaborative classroom where

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students felt able to express their thoughts and emotions openly (O-BT, C, UE). This learning environment bridged theoretical and practical understanding, enabling students to connect their dramatic exploration with a deeper awareness of ethical behaviour and digital responsibility. By providing students with the tools to critically reflect on their behaviour in a structured and supportive environment, Invisible Theatre helped to foster prosocial behaviour and enhanced students' digital citizenship skills (O-BT, SAD). The impact of these performances extended beyond the classroom (as mentioned in focus groups), equipping students with the ethical awareness and emotional intelligence necessary to engage responsibly in their everyday digital interactions.

7.2.2 Forum Theatre

Forum Theatre provided a stage for student agency in digital citizenship across all four schools. This method effectively deepened students' engagement by encouraging them to unpack societal issues through active participation. Howard's (2004) analysis of Boal's techniques suggest that by placing participants in the roles of both observer and actor, Forum Theatre allows students to actively engage with social oppressions, challenging them to explore potential interventions. This dynamic interaction fosters critical awareness, enabling students to identify and critique oppressive systems both in the classroom, and online. Schaedler (2010) also outlines the transformative potential of this method, noting how it empowers learners to confront and rethink their societal positions, encouraging critical thinking through active participation, just as the students did within this research.

At Madike High School, I observed Mrs Elsa using Forum Theatre to create performances mirroring real-life oppression and discrimination. By Lesson 5, she shifted the focus to examining digital footprints by reviewing newspaper articles, tying back to themes of public perception and personal responsibility online (O-BT). This progression of themes demonstrated how Forum Theatre fosters critical thinking while helping students connect the theatrical exercises with their real-world digital consequences. Schaedler (2010) identifies how these connections are critical in helping students transfer their learning from the

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abstract to the practical, while they internalise the lessons and apply them in digital contexts. Boal's concept of the 'spect-actor' was evident here as students transitioned from passive observers to active participants, engaging deeply with societal issues and reflecting on their personal digital behaviours (Boal, 1979). I observed this gradual integration of real-world scenarios as what deepened their understanding of social dynamics, as students began to critically assess their actions both onstage and as human-centred citizens.

In Forum Theatre, it became evident that students were not just performing subject relevant content but were also engaging with the material at a deeper level. Through their reflections on the implications of their digital tattoos, students demonstrated how Forum Theatre enabled them to connect abstract concepts, such as online behaviour and consequences, to real-world actions. This aligns with the claim that the interplay between performance and reflection can spark deeper critical thought, demonstrating how the process encouraged the students at all four research sites to understand and internalise the ethical ramifications of their digital behaviour (Howard, 2004).

Over at Montawl High School, Mr Simon used Forum Theatre to tackle online conflicts and the role of bystanders in digital harassment scenarios. As spect-actors (Boal, 1979), students actively embodied behaviours through situations based on catphishing and mob mentality, gaining a deeper understanding of online oppression and strategies for responding to these situations. This approach workshopped the immediate impacts of online actions and encouraged students to consider the value of active intervention in bullying situations. In another example at Tedrain High School, Mrs Thomas used Forum Theatre to address societal issues, guiding students through the complexities of digital interactions and their broader implications. Her framework enabled students to reflect critically and engage meaningfully with these challenges.

In the examples above, the teachers acted as facilitators, guiding the narrative while allowing students to playbuild their own ending. This approach demonstrated the transformative power of Forum Theatre by enabling students to experiment with possible resolutions and

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explore their implications through the spect-actor role (Boal, 1995). By empowering students to co-create the narrative and engage with real-world digital behaviours, the teachers fostered a classroom environment where discussions were grounded in performative practice. The teachers' role in navigating the post-performance discussions was also crucial for helping students connect their theatre experiences to ethical behaviours in digital spaces.

Students, transformed into 'spect-actors,' were encouraged to actively participate in the theatrical pieces as performers and co-creators of the narrative. This involvement was instrumental in fostering an environment where students were comfortable proposing alternative solutions and engaging meaningfully with the material. Boal refers to this process in Forum Theatre as one where students engage with external oppressions while confronting internalised forms of control, which he refers to as the 'cop in the head' (Boal, 1995, p. 15). Internalised controls, or the 'cop in the head,' represent the subconscious ways individuals adopt societal expectations and regulate their behaviour according to these norms, even when there is no direct external pressure. In the context of digital citizenship, this reflects how students might hesitate to challenge online misconduct, fearing judgment or reprisal, or passively accept harmful digital norms.

In the cases explored in this study, internalised control became evident when students initially avoided confronting online bullying or harmful digital behaviours; however, through Forum Theatre exercises, they were able to make these internalised barriers visible by embodying and externalising them within the aesthetic space. For example, in Mr Simon's class at Montawl High School, students who were reluctant to address issues of catphishing and online bullying during traditional discussions became more active in proposing interventions when embodying these scenarios on stage (O-BT, IL, C, PSS). Boal (1995) explains that by engaging in this process, participants are empowered to confront and dismantle internalised controls, enabling them to act more freely in response to external challenges.

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As the students experimented with the different interventions on stage, they began to re-evaluate both their digital behaviours and the internal constraints that influenced their decisions. This process proved highly effective at all four research sites, as students moved beyond passive engagement to actively rethinking and reshaping their roles as digital citizens. Their direct involvement in these performative exercises provided a powerful mechanism for internalising the lessons on digital citizenship, turning abstract concepts into tangible and actionable learning experiences.

7.2.3 *Image Theatre*

At Lupaw and Madike High Schools, Image Theatre provided an opportunity to foster an environment where students could explore a broader range of emotions and social dynamics without relying on verbal communication. This method facilitated a deeper engagement with complex interpersonal interactions between students by encouraging them to reflect on how their emotions and intentions could be expressed physically. By stepping into roles without spoken words, students were required to be more attuned to subtle changes in body language and physical proximity, which heightened their awareness of non-verbal cues in human behaviour.

During Lesson 2 at Lupaw High School, I observed students interpreting emotions through 'complete the image' scenes, an exercise where students finish a partially created tableau using their bodies to express emotions. (O-BT, SED). This exercise prompted students to think critically about how emotions could be communicated through posture, gesture, and facial expressions, bypassing verbal language entirely. As students worked to convey feelings such as anger, joy, or fear through their bodies, they learned to rely on physical expression to share their emotional states. This non-verbal communication required a heightened focus on the nuances of body language, which in turn deepened their engagement with the material. Boal (1979) suggests that Image Theatre enables participants to portray abstract concepts through physical representation, making it a powerful tool for exploring complex emotions and interpersonal dynamics. The lack of dialogue in these

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scenarios forced students to become more observant and introspective, as they needed to interpret both their peers' and their own bodily movements to convey and understand meaning.

At Madike High School, in Lesson 4, the focus was on discerning trustworthiness through non-verbal indicators such as facial expressions and body posture, key elements of Image Theatre. By relying solely on physical gestures and facial cues, students were encouraged to critically assess and interpret the sincerity of others without using words. This activity highlighted the potential of Image Theatre to help students reflect on how non-verbal cues shape our perceptions of trustworthiness, both in human-centred and online spaces. As they engaged with these physical representations, students became better at decoding non-verbal signals like eye contact, posture, and facial expressions that suggest trust or deceit. This prompted insightful classroom discussions and comments about similar interactions online, where interpreting trustworthiness becomes more challenging without these cues (O-BT, IL, C, PSS).

Through the process of Image Theatre, students learned to engage with their observational skills, strengthening their ability to 'read' the emotions and intentions of others based solely on physical cues. This direct engagement with body language enhanced their emotional intelligence, allowing them to better understand how emotions manifest in others and how to communicate their response thoughtfully (Jefferson & Anderson, 2017; Orlovich, 2024). The ability to interpret and communicate via non-verbal cues was central to the exercise, offering students a vital skillset for navigating human behaviour both offline and online, particularly in contexts where communication lacks tone or body language.

The teachers played a crucial role in facilitating these interactions, guiding students to use their bodies as expressive tools. By embodying emotions and scenarios, students practiced articulating complex feelings beyond spoken language, fostering self-awareness and empathy. This physical engagement helped bridge the gap between internal experiences and external expressions, reinforcing their understanding of non-verbal communication.

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Through their performances, students represented emotions and physically experienced them, deepening their emotional insight and capacity for expression.

Additionally, the teachers ensured that students worked together to create and interpret images, fostering teamwork, enhancing communication skills, and building a cohesive class.

This collaborative process strengthened students' ability to understand body language as a form of communication, highlighting the role of non-verbal cues in conveying emotions and meaning. By engaging in Image Theatre, I observed students collaborating, valuing each other's input and noticed a sense of belonging and mutual respect emerging as a result of the safe and supportive classroom environment conducive to learning and personal growth.

Through their shared performances and reflections, students collectively interpreted and built meaning together. Boal's (1995) emphasis on collective creation is evident in these interactions, as students were encouraged to view their peers' non-verbal expressions as integral components of shared meaning-making. This process, in turn, strengthened their ability to interpret non-verbal cues in real-world interactions, both online and offline.

7.2.4 *Mirroring and Social Masks*

Mirroring and social mask work facilitated meaningful interactions between teachers and students, particularly in exploring digital citizenship. By leveraging these techniques, I observed teachers guiding their students through processes that fostered a deeper understanding of personal and societal behaviours and their implications in the blended world.

During the mirroring exercises in Lessons 1 and 3 at Lupaw High School (O, BT), I observed the teacher facilitating reflective interactions when students faced each other in two lines, mirroring the actions of the opposite line. This visual and physical representation of action and reaction helped students grasp the concept of responsibility and consequence in digital interactions, facilitated by the teacher's guidance to encourage reflection and discussion about what each action might represent in a digital context.

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In Montawl High School, Mr Simon drew on the concept of mirroring when discussing how easily information can be spread online (digital dissemination). He highlighted how thoughtless sharing of content online, often done without considering consequences, mirrors the lack of awareness many students displayed during physical mirroring exercises. Here, Mr Simon connected the physical mirroring of behaviour in class to the way digital actions, such as sharing posts or comments, can be mirrored or replicated by others online without a full understanding of the broader impact (O-BT, SED, EPDC). This connection reinforced how digital behaviours often mirror real-world consequences, encouraging more deliberate reflection before sharing content online.

In another example, at Tedrain High School, Mrs Thomas guided students through the use of social masks to explore different social scenarios, such as interactions between long-term couples. This exercise demonstrated the variability of personal expression depending on context and provided a safe space for students to explore and discuss individual and social identities. Mrs Thomas facilitated these interactions by prompting students to reflect on why different 'masks' are adopted in various situations and how this relates to their online and offline behaviours. Similarly, at Madike High School, social masks were used to discuss online personas versus real-life behaviours. The teacher's role in this context was to help students make connections between the masks we wear online and the implications of these personas for real-world interactions. This was done through structured activities and guided discussions, where students could openly explore and debate the authenticity of online versus offline identities.

The use of mirroring and social masks in drama education for digital citizenship learning engaged students actively with their peers and teachers, creating a deeper level of reflection on their behaviours and their broader social and ethical implications. Boal (1979) highlights the transformative potential of physical exercises such as mirroring to foster critical reflection on social actions, which is further supported by Neelands (Neelands, 2009) in his discussion of how drama can enhance collaborative learning and empathy development. These findings

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supported how in my reasearch the embodied activities from drama pedagogy, provided an opportunity for students to visualise and experience the consequences of their behaviours.

Mirroring and social masks did not just offer reflective exercises; they enabled students to engage and consider emotional and social layers of online interactions. Unlike other activities that focus on theory or abstract discussion, these methods grounded the students' experiences in the tangible, which prompted more immediate connections between their physical actions and their online behaviours. This interaction aligns with the concept of experiential learning discussed by Mattson (2017), where embodied participation deepens students' understanding of abstract concepts like digital responsibility.

7.2.5 *Sculpting*

Boal's Sculpting method enhanced the interaction between teachers and students in studying digital citizenship through drama pedagogy. Used across all research sites, this method helped students give a physical form to complex emotions, particularly those that are hard to express verbally, such as fear, anger, and isolation in digital interactions. The impact of Sculpting's potential lies in its ability to bridge physical expression with emotional awareness, making abstract digital behaviours and their consequences more tangible and relatable (Boal, 1995). Rather than mirroring or roleplay, Sculpting allows students to externalise internal states, deepening their understanding of how emotions drive online actions.

At Lupaw High School, I observed Sculpting activities addressing theme of bullying, where students created physical representations of the emotions of fear, isolation, and anger. This process of externalisation was vital as it helped the students confront feelings that are often hidden or unaddressed in both physical and online bullying scenarios (O-BT). By physically manifesting these emotions, the students were able to shift from internalised feelings of aggression or victim to a space where they could critically observe and discuss their experiences. This shift was key for them to develop and demonstrate improved empathy, as

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they were no longer passively experiencing their emotions but actively engaging with them, demonstrating a more profound understanding of how bullying affects both themselves and others.

Ms Skye guided students through this process by encouraging them to reflect on the psychological impacts of cyberbullying, both from the perspective of the bully and the victim. The physical act of Sculpting provided a safe space for students to 'see' these emotions as external objects, making them more accessible for discussion and reflection (O-BT). Bundy, Dunn, and Stinson (2015) highlight that drama activities like this creates opportunities for students to confront social issues head-on, encouraging deeper emotional and ethical engagement. In this context, the act of embodying emotions helped the students connect their feelings to broader societal norms and the ethical responsibilities they hold in digital spaces. By physically representing the emotional consequences of bullying, students were able to see the tangible impact of their actions, deepening their understanding of empathy and the role of emotional regulation in shaping respectful online interactions (Mattson, 2016).

This was similar to what I observed at Madike High School and Montawl High School, where Sculpting exercises enabled students to physically embody emotions from anger to joy and draw connections to these emotional states in their digital actions. The Teachers played an essential role in connecting these embodied emotions to online behaviours like cyberbullying, trolling, or offering support through positive comments. These exercises facilitated discussions about how emotional states influence digital interactions, such as how anger can escalate online conflicts or how supportive comments can spread positivity. The teachers were instrumental in helping the students connect these emotions to digital behaviours, like online communication and cyberbullying, guiding students to reflect on their own digital habits and the emotional drivers behind them. Physically manifesting emotions through sculpture as experiential learning can help students develop empathy and self-regulation in digital spaces (Mattson, 2016, 2017).

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At Tedrain High School, Mrs Thomas actively engaged with students during their Sculpting activities, encouraging them to contemplate how their sculptures represented real-life situations and the responsibilities of digital citizenship. When students physically manifested abstract digital interactions I observed, such as the effect of a harmful comment or the social isolation caused by exclusion from a group chat, students could see and feel the impact of their actions. This made the consequences of digital behaviours tangible, a key component of experiential learning (Papert, 1987). Through these activities, the teachers bridged the gap between emotional and intellectual engagement, guiding students to consider both the emotional impact and the ethical implications of their digital behaviours.

Compared to other methods like mirroring, the strength of Sculpting was its capacity to make abstract emotions physically tangible, fostering a more personal and empathetic connection to digital interactions. By engaging students in physical representations of emotions, teachers helped them reflect on the emotional undercurrents of online behaviour, creating a classroom environment that encouraged active learning, critical reflection, and deeper emotional engagement with digital citizenship.

7.2.6 *Roleplay and Playbuilding*

Following the success of techniques such as Invisible Theatre, Forum Theatre, Image Theatre, and Sculpting, Roleplay and Playbuilding were equally integral to fostering a dynamic classroom environment where students could experiment with different identities and scenarios. These interconnected methods supported deep engagement with the learning intentions of each lesson by allowing students to embody roles and collaboratively construct narratives that reflected real-world challenges.

At Lupaw High School, I observed how roleplay activities varied from exploring social masks and hidden emotions to addressing global issues like justice and climate change. During the first lesson, students engaged in scenarios that delved into the complexities of toxic relationships, utilising dramatic expression to gain an experiential understanding of diverse

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perspectives. This method effectively allowed students to experience and understand different viewpoints as both theoretical concepts and lived realities. In Lesson 4, the focus shifted to the dynamics of online behaviour, with students roleplaying a conflict in an online chat. This exercise allowed them to adopt various roles, enhancing their understanding of different emotional experiences and viewpoints.

Complementing the roleplaying activities, students engaged in playbuilding during Lesson 5 at Lupaw High School and Lesson 6 at Madike High School. These sessions enabled students to collaboratively create performances that reflected their understanding of digital citizenship and the impact of a digital footprint or tattoo. At Montawl High School, a noteworthy moment of playbuilding involved performing different social situations, with students actively participating in the narrative construction process from conceptualisation to performance.

These playbuilding projects often culminated in performances that synthesised classroom discussions and personal insights into theatrical presentations, reflecting students' growing understanding of the themes within the teaching and learning program. In roleplaying and playbuilding, teachers acted as facilitators, guiding the creative process and ensuring that all student contributions were valued and included in the final performances. This approach reinforced the educational content while promoting cooperative learning and mutual respect within the classroom. Teachers encouraged students to express their thoughts and emotions freely, fostering an inclusive learning environment.

By incorporating Roleplay and Playbuilding, I observed a holistic enhancement of students' engagement and understanding of digital citizenship. These methods supported exploring complex social issues and fostered a collaborative and respectful classroom culture.

Through these dynamic and interactive techniques, students could internalise the lessons on digital citizenship, turning abstract concepts into tangible, lived experiences.

7.3 Collaboration

The collaborative process observed in all lessons at all four schools was vital in Boal's theatre methods, where the playbuilding of scenes and dialogue fostered a reflective learning environment. Collaboration in this context extended beyond merely working together; it fostered a deeper engagement between teachers and students, cultivating shared ownership of the learning process. This aligns with Jefferson & Anderson's (2017) emphasis on the critical role of collaboration in education, where co-construction of knowledge encourages both teacher and student agency and enhances critical reflection.

It was particularly visible during Invisible Theatre activities. For instance, at Lupaw High School, Ms Skye and a group of four students worked together closely to perform a realistic scene for an unexpected classroom audience (O-C). This collaboration required a delicate balance between teacher guidance and student autonomy. Ms Skye had to step back and relinquish control, allowing her students to make creative decisions while ensuring they achieved the educational objectives. This balance demonstrated the trust needed for effective collaboration, as students felt empowered to take ownership of their performances. Ms Skye acted as a facilitator, supporting rather than directing the learning process (Jefferson & Anderson, 2017).

The observed classroom dynamic reflects Neelands's (2009) idea of "dethroning the teacher," where traditional hierarchies are intentionally flattened and the teacher adopts the role of facilitator rather than a director. By relinquishing control and inviting students into co-authorship of the dramatic process, Ms Skye enacted drama as a "pedagogy of choice" (Neelands (2009, p. 17). In this model, students were empowered to make creative decisions, collaborate, and negotiate meaning collectively. They experienced both freedom and responsibility, which Neelands identifies as foundational for pro-social education. Invisible Theatre in this case not only fostered agency and engagement but also embodied the ethical and relational possibilities of ensemble drama (Boal, 1979; Neelands, 2009). By doing so, she created an environment where students could engage with the material more

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meaningfully, reflecting on their roles as performers and their ethical commitments in a digital context.

At Tedrain High School, Mrs Thomas collaborated with students to develop scenes exploring specific social challenges. Instead of simply imparting knowledge, she engaged students in a process of co-constructing content, with students contributing ideas and shaping scenes based on their understanding of the issues. This teacher–student partnership was vital in the observed drama pedagogy, as it shifted the dynamic from a hierarchical structure to a more equitable, collaborative one, where learning resulted from joint exploration and co-creation. This process encouraged creativity and fostered deeper critical thinking, as students actively participated in building the scene and reflecting on its implications. In this context, teachers acted as facilitators rather than transmitters of knowledge, allowing students to negotiate meaning and apply their learning to real-world contexts, particularly within the blended world. This approach reflects Neelands’s principle that collaborative drama processes are most powerful when students and teachers share responsibility for meaning-making, positioning learning as a joint exploration rather than a top-down transmission of knowledge (Neelands, 2009).

At Madike High School, I observed Aria and Rose collaborating on a performance about digital misunderstandings. The scene focused on how a student used another student's photo without permission on social media to spread nasty rumours (O-C). This collaboration was key because it allowed the students to negotiate the structure of the performance and the emotional weight of the situation they were portraying. Through dialogue and movement, they playbuilt how to express the consequences of misinformation, such as the betrayal, shame, and anger arising from misusing personal images. I heard the students connect the process to their reflections on the emotional and ethical dilemmas they faced or had previously faced in their own online situations, where they made similar decisions about privacy, consent, and reputation. The collaborative nature of the performance allowed them

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to embody these consequences, making abstract concepts like trust and responsibility more concrete through their physical actions and expressions.

In a similar moment at Lupaw High School, students reflected on each other's movements while developing a series of tableaux. This approach helped the students physically represent online behaviours, like offering support or causing harm, which deepened their understanding of how digital interactions carry emotional and social consequences (O-C, BT, EU)⁵⁹. This collaboration enabled students to embody digital interactions kinesthetically, exploring how physical actions can represent online behaviours, such as supportive or harmful gestures. The students' collaborative work on these tableaux helped them consider their digital interactions more deeply, using their bodies to reflect on abstract digital concepts.

These examples of collaboration demonstrated that, through dialogue, negotiation, and collective problem-solving, students worked through the emotional and social consequences of their digital actions. In each case, collaboration was not simply a matter of working together; it required emotional and cognitive investment, with teachers guiding students to navigate their learning, build trust, and share insights. These findings demonstrate social constructionism in action: understandings of digital citizenship, ethical behaviour, and community engagement are co-constructed in the drama classroom, rather than passed from teacher to student. Through collaborative playbuilding, reflective discussion, and embodied performance, students and teachers negotiated, refined, and collectively built the meanings that shaped their learning (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

Anderson's (2017) research shows that true collaboration depends on vulnerability and trust between teachers and students, leading to deeper and more meaningful learning experiences. This was evident in the way students were able to connect their experiences in the classroom to their understanding of the digital world. The collaborative nature of the

⁵⁹ O indicates data drawn from classroom observations. C refers to the theme Collaboration, BT refers to Boal Theatre, and EU refers to Empathy and Understanding.

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drama classroom created an environment where students and teachers articulated their thoughts, shared emotional insights, and deepened their understanding of the blended world together.

7.3.1 *Teacher and Student Engagement*

Teacher and student engagement with digital citizenship concepts was vital to this research and required a high level of involvement to successfully meet the u.b.do teaching unit's educational objectives. Through drama pedagogy, students evolved from passive information receivers to active participants in dialogues that shaped their understanding and responsibilities as digital citizens. This aligns with Neelands' (O'Connor, 2010) approach to drama education, where engagement fosters a deeper connection between personal experience and societal roles, enhancing both self-awareness and empathy in digital contexts.

7.4 *Expansion of Perspectives on Digital Citizenship.*

Drama pedagogy enhanced students' understanding of digital citizenship by broadening their perspectives and encouraging deeper reflections on their roles in online communities.

Through interviews and focus groups, teachers and students identified techniques such as Image Theatre and Forum Theatre as pivotal in improving their understanding of digital identity, self-awareness, and online interactions. Ms Skye noted that Boal's techniques facilitated transformational shifts in thinking about digital identity as her students explored how their personal expression and online identities are shaped by the expectations of their digital audience (Boal, 1979; Howard, 2004). This aligns with insights from Bhukhanwala (2014), showing how drama enabled students to critically assess their digital behaviours and responsibilities. Ms Skye explained:

They are using the Boal activities, particularly image theatre, to change their thinking and mindset. Through the exploration of Boal Theatre, we look at a serious issue, and we can explore the different sides. The mirroring or the Sculpting activities also

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helped to be included in their play-building piece. Exploring that individuality through image theatre was interesting because they all do the same poses and have similar looks and smiles. Exploring the selfies facilitated the definition of their individuality. These exercises may have led them to understand that it is ok to be your person. (I-EPDC)

During the observations, I saw all teachers using emojis or masks as prompts for storylines within the drama exercises to increase students' awareness of online self-representation. These activities prompted students across different schools to engage in deep reflection, leading them to recognise and draw connections to how their portrayal online may not always be how they are perceived. This realisation emphasises the effectiveness of drama pedagogy in enhancing students' comprehension of digital identities and the complexities of online interactions (Bundy et al., 2015). Mrs Elsa commented on this:

They wrote in their logs that the moment of doing exercises in line with the masks and emojis while trying to represent a storyline was eye-opening. They also understood that how we represent ourselves in the media and write ourselves in the online world is not how others see us. The students indicated that the whole experience was provoking, thoughtful, and reflective triggering. (I-EPDC)

The self-awareness students gained through drama pedagogy also extended to their roles in broader online communities. By using Boal's spect-actor technique, students shifted their perspectives from focusing solely on themselves as potential victims to consider the roles of bystanders and oppressors in digital scenarios. This shift in perspective made students more empathetic and prompted them to become active participants in online spaces, rather than passive bystanders (Boal, 1995). Mr Simon reflected on this:

When we were doing some of the spect-actor work where they were stepping in, a lot of their solutions were very victim-focused. I stepped in and led some discussion around it, looking at the avenue for both if you are the oppressor and the bystander. I

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think that was a real light bulb for a lot of them. In the subsequent lessons, they still looked at what you could do as someone who was being oppressed. They were looking for solutions so they could start seeing themselves more as citizens than bystanders. We started to see from some of the subsequent exercises as well that they were looking at not just the effect on the individual but also the impact on the broader communities. Specifically, their role in broader communities and the role they could have in improving situations where that oppression was taking place. They did not look at it as just a single one-off thing. They started to see how there was an interconnectedness to that online community, which extended into the classroom. (I-EPDC)

He continued:

One of the things that was positive to come out of it is that they chose a digital citizen and the effect that they will have on the online community. It involved making a conscious choice to influence their kind of citizenship positively by stepping in rather than being a bystander. A lot of them recognised that they had been bystanders online in the past. (I-EPDC)

Considering Mr Simon's observations, drama pedagogy enabled students to move beyond a surface-level understanding of digital citizenship, focusing on avoiding negative behaviour and actively engaging with and shaping online communities. Before participating in this research, students revealed in observations and focus groups that they viewed digital citizenship lessons as a set of rules to follow: "don't post inappropriate content" or "don't bully", "think before you act" (O, EPDC). This rule-based understanding framed digital citizenship in a restrictive, reactive way, focusing on avoiding negative behaviours rather than actively engaging with the digital space (Mattson, 2016). However, after participating in Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979) methods, the students began to see digital citizenship as a more dynamic and participatory role where they could actively intervene to improve online interactions. Boal's theatre encouraged the students to reflect critically on

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their actions and the broader social context in which they exist, making this transformation in understanding a natural outcome of the student's engagement with these techniques (Boal, 1995). Through these techniques, I observed them embodying different personas, reflecting on multiple perspectives, the roles of victims, bystanders, and even oppressors, allowing them to consider the motivations behind online behaviour and the consequences of their actions on the broader community (O-BT, EPDC).

Mrs Thomas also reflected on how these activities helped students realise the lasting impact of their online actions, often referred to as their "digital tattoo". Where students previously might have acted impulsively online, the drama pedagogy encouraged more critical reflection on how others would perceive their behaviour. As Leigh Anne Howard (2004) explains, Boal's methods foster reflection on social behaviour by creating a space where students can experience and analyse these behaviours through dramatic techniques. This change in mindset, moving from passive to proactive engagement, was crucial. It demonstrated how students transitioned from seeing themselves as isolated individuals to recognising their role as active participants capable of shaping online spaces positively. Boal's participatory approach encourages students to take ownership of their role in society, which in this case extends to their role as digital citizens.

Drama helped the students recognise the diversity of experiences and perspectives within the blended world, fostering a more empathetic and inclusive approach to online interactions. Stepping into roles such as the bystander or the oppressor prompted them to consider perspectives they may not have previously understood (Boal, 1979), leading to richer, more comprehensive understanding of digital citizenship. Mrs Thomas elaborated:

They thought they could describe digital citizenship in one sentence, but after the unit, they realised it was more complex. I think they were challenged in that regard, and I do think that their definition of digital citizenship changed after the unit. The conversations became less about being the bad guy and more about motivations. Why is someone motivated to be a bystander or post something online? They gained

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a deeper understanding of their role in the digital and the real world. Having performed pieces that may reflect their past made them face those issues head-on and communicate those issues through their peers. (I-EPDC)

In the focus groups, students shared how their perspectives on digital citizenship evolved. They discussed digital hygiene, which refers to practices and habits necessary to maintain online safety and cybersecurity. Students became more aware of safeguarding their personal information, navigating privacy settings, and recognising potential cybersecurity threats. These discussions align with Kikerpill's (2021) concept of 'internal spheres of protection', emphasising that individuals must take personal responsibility for their cybersecurity practices. This includes recognising risks like phishing and identity theft, critical components of maintaining digital hygiene. Students articulated that their enhanced perspectives from the unit helped them be better prepared to protect their data and be more considerate of respectful and cautious online interactions.

At Lupaw High School, the impact of drama pedagogy on digital citizenship understanding was also demonstrated through the increased opportunities for student reflection. The Sculpting exercises, in particular, provided a profound opportunity for students to reflect and consider their perspectives. Max noted the powerful audience responses to the still images, saying, "When we were doing the Sculpting thing, there was a lot of audience response, and everyone took it a different way, and my perspective changed" (FG-EPDC). This process helped him see situations from multiple viewpoints. "We were doing a still picture, and everyone interpreted it differently. I had an interpretation, and then someone else would contribute, which would help me understand it from another perspective" (FG-EPDC), he explained. In this case, the Sculpting exercises functioned as gentle "nudges" as described by Obajemu et al. (2024), guiding students towards reflective thinking without imposing explicit rules. Rather than direct instruction, these activities subtly encouraged students to rethink their digital interactions, recognise multiple perspectives, and become more aware of

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digital citizenship's complexities. By reflecting on their online behaviours and the potential for misinterpretation, students became more conscious of their responsibilities in digital spaces.

By guiding students to reflect on their online behaviours and possible misinterpretations, these activities helped them become more conscious of their responsibilities in digital spaces. This reflection on digital interactions encourages exploration through playbuilding, positively impacting students like Beryl. She reflected on how changing negative scenarios in scenes to positive ones demonstrated the potential consequences of online interactions.

"When we did scenarios, and then they changed them to make them positive, it showed me how wrong things can go sometimes and allowed me to consider different perspectives that I had not before" (FG-EPDC) she said. This was a decisive moment for her and her understanding of thoughtful online engagement. Harold extended this thought and stated how drama provided a more engaging approach to learning about digital citizenship. He found it more compelling than signing contracts or being reminded to think before posting: "Learning about something through drama was way more exciting than signing a contract and hearing do not think before you post, which changed my perspective" (FG-EPDC), he shared. The engaging nature of Drama made the lessons more memorable and impactful and proved that the experiential learning and reflective practices fostered a deeper connection and understanding of concepts like responsible online behaviour for Harold (Darr & Doss, 2022; Kikerpill, 2021).

As the discussion progressed, Alex realised the distinct differences between the online and offline worlds. The drama activities facilitated this understanding, helping him navigate both environments more effectively. Reflecting on these differences, he noted: "I think it has made me realise that it is two completely different worlds [online and offline], where they can be very different things" (FG-EPDC). This insight shows how students like Alex realised they are increasingly required to balance multiple personas and behaviours when engaging online, something that he had not considered or practised prior to this research. The active,

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making, reflective practice increased his awareness of this to better understand how to be a digital citizen (Obajemu et al., 2024).

The focus group also highlighted further instances of students demonstrating an increased understanding of the need for scepticism and caution online. As digital interactions can be deceptive, students began to approach the digital world with more critical awareness. Jake emphasised how easily things could be faked on the internet: "Things online can be faked easily. So, it's taught me to be a bit more cautious" (FG-EPDC). Alex agreed, adding, "Yeah, do not believe everything you see online" (FG-EPDC). This growing skepticism reflects the research's ability to address a broader concern in digital literacy: our responsibility to raise awareness of students' ability to identify potential misinformation and enhance their capacity to critically evaluate online content (Obajemu et al., 2024).

Ultimately, the practical, hands-on and reflective exercises deepened their understanding and allowed them to embody and experience different perspectives, fostering greater empathy and responsibility in digital spaces (Boal, 1995; Neelands, 2009). Liberty summed up the experience by noting: "Before drama, I did not really think about being a digital citizen, but now, learning more learning about it and doing practical things has increased my understanding and improved my perspective" (FG-EPDC). Her reflection outlines how drama made her more conscious of her role as a digital citizen, reflecting the overall impact of the teaching and learning unit of students at Lupaw High School.

At Madike High School, the focus group discussion revealed how drama pedagogy, mainly the lessons with emojis and play-building, broadened students' understanding and perspectives of digital citizenship. Building on a previously mentioned example, I will unpack this approach to highlight new insights on how these activities encouraged students to consider the nuances of online behaviour and identity, allowing them to critically assess and reflect on their digital personas using their own words from the focus group.

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To provide the background of the focus group quotes below, I will outline the observation of the lesson referred to by the students. The class viewed a series of emoji images and selected one to explore its meaning further through masks, discussing how these symbols could represent different facets of an individual's persona online. This approach allowed for the exploration of the concept of digital masks, which is how we present ourselves in one way online that might not fully align with our offline reality. Through play-building activities, students crafted narratives around these emojis, translating digital concepts into drama scenarios that fostered a more profound, empathetic understanding of online interactions and misinterpretation. These exercises reinforced the value of mindful communication in digital spaces. By engaging in symbolic storytelling, such as portraying the consequences of being metaphorically 'handcuffed' to digital decisions, students learned about the permanence of online actions and the significant need for digital hygiene. The activities were structured to enhance students' understanding of their online behaviours and encourage a shift in perspective, recognising the responsibility of being an active participant in digital communities (O-EPDC).

Reflecting on this experience, Aria noted how the exercises made her realise that misconceptions in the digital world happen easily, "During the drama, the meanings were a lot deeper than what the string of emojis meant, and it made me realise that misconceptions in the digital world are so easy to occur, and it helped me avoid bigger issues in the future" (FG-EPDC). Jasmine shared a similar sentiment, explaining how the play-building exercises impacted her understanding of online realities. She said:

Although we are always told that what you see online is not real, it was hard for me to internalise, but seeing other people portray this happy online and unhappy offline through their play-building exercises showed what we have all been told like in our entire lives. It helped me to believe that people are not exactly as perfect and as amazing as they seem to be online. (FG-EPDC)

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The use of masks in drama also helped other students, like Bianca, understand how they present different perspectives to different people. Bianca reflected, "The masks lessons we did helped me understand how we put different perspectives for different people and scenarios. It was interesting to see how much we put on masks for other people." (FG-EPDC). In this way, Boal's (1979) concept of *metaxis* is evident again, as the drama activities helped students explore how their personal identities shift between different realities, both online and offline, as they adapt to various audiences.

For Mulan, engaging in these activities shifted her view of digital citizenship. She discussed, "I think that before this topic, I never really referred to myself as a digital citizen. Now, I see how we are digital citizens, and I feel like it provides a highlight that gives a person a little bit more responsibility for having a role in society that one should control" (FG-EPDC). Here, Mulan reflects what Heath (2018) describes as the 'awakening' to digital citizenship responsibilities, where students begin to recognise the deeper implications of their online presence. By engaging in reflective exercises, Mulan and her peers were able to see themselves as active participants in digital society, not just passive users of technology.

Rose also had an awakening moment when she discussed her increased awareness of digital citizenship as technology advances. She said, "I also understand that being a digital citizen is important as technology advances and the digital world becomes more blended and mixed with the regular outside world" (FG-EPDC). Through the reflective and interactive drama activities, students like Rose were able to better navigate and understand their identities across both online and offline environments, recognising the significance of responsible and ethical participation in digital spaces (Obajemu et al., 2024).

At the Montawl High School focus group, the students also explained how their perspectives changed due to drama, explicitly highlighting a shift from fear-based approaches to a more reflective method of understanding digital citizenship. Their reflections came from engaging in a lesson centred around the Mask Exercise, inspired by Augusto Boal's exploration of the imaginary masks people adopt to navigate various social situations (Babbage, 2004; Boal,

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1979). This exercise explored the different personas or 'masks' people adopt in response to distinct contexts, ranging from personal interactions to digital engagements, to foster an understanding of the implications of these masks in both online and offline worlds (O-BT-EPDC).

Mr Simon drew connections within the class to how Boal discussed masks, delving into the invisible masks that individuals wear to adapt to varying social situations, whether at work, school, family, or friends. As Boal suggested, social masks are outward expressions adopted to navigate specific contexts, align with group norms, or adhere to social rituals (Boal, 1979). The exercise posed to students involved reflective questions aimed at identifying various 'masks' employed in different scenarios online and offline and understanding the motivations behind these adaptations. Boal's methods allow participants to navigate contradictions between roles in life and how such dynamics exist in different social settings (Zembylas, 2022). Through the roles and spotlight performances, the students demonstrated this through various scenarios related to social interactions, from everyday greetings between different characters to more complex situations requiring a switch of roles upon a signal (O-EPDC).

Students began considering how 'digital masks', the personas curated for online platforms, compare to and contrast with the 'social masks' identified in Boal's methods. Through this comparison, students reflected on how they portray themselves online while becoming more aware of the dissonance between these digital identities and their real-world interactions. The transition from examining real-world interactions to reflecting on online behaviours provided a lens through which students could assess and balance their digital personas to foster more responsible citizenship (Darr & Doss, 2022). The teacher-led discussions after the exercise encouraged students to contemplate the permanence of online actions, the ease of misunderstanding in digital communications, and strategies for positive online engagement (O-BT, EPDC).

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Caterina's reflection highlighted the long-term consequences of social media posts, demonstrating her increasing awareness of the topic. She expressed how quickly posts could spread, even if they were initially only intended for a limited audience. She explained:

It brought awareness specifically to the long-lasting impact of something you post on social media. For example, if someone were to post on their close friends and one person decided to share it with others, it would get blown out of proportion quickly, even though the person who posted it intended to be between them. It is not safe on social media because anything you post, even though maybe to a select group of people, has a possibility of spreading, even though that was not intended to happen.

(FG-EPDC)

Caterina's reflection highlighted the long-term consequences of social media posts, demonstrating her newfound realisation of how social media posts can spread quickly and uncontrollably, creating a 'digital tattoo' where actions can have lasting consequences beyond their original intent for a vast audience (Kikerpill, 2021). By encouraging students to contemplate their roles in these digital scenarios, the pedagogy provided a space for them to understand the deeper implications of digital interactions. Tsehay's insights on conflict resolution captured the practical impact of these exercises, as she noted how her approach to resolving issues online has changed. The activities have helped her understand the strategies for navigating online conflict more thoughtfully. She explained, "The awareness of what I can do and how I can do it, like ways that you can resolve a conflict online, has changed" (FG-EPDC). This finding aligns with Zembylas (2022), who noted that applying Boal's methods, particularly in conflict resolution scenarios, enables individuals to reflect on their positionality in online and offline spaces and develop strategies for resolving conflicts empathetically.

These exercises were equally transformative for Emma, deepening her understanding of the interconnectedness between her online and offline selves. By engaging with Boal's metaphor of masks, Emma reflected on how these identities shift depending on the context,

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acknowledging that this topic helped her notice changes in her behaviour in the blended world, emphasising how the pedagogy enabled her to engage with critical self-reflection during the learning (Heath, 2018): "I became more aware of the connections between those two lives [online and offline]. Like the masks that we were talking about before, I started identifying them more often, and I started noticing changes. This topic helped change my perspective" (FG-EPDC).

The broader impact of these reflective exercises was not limited to individual students; across all focus groups, including those at Lupaw, Madike, Montawl, and Tedrain High Schools, students consistently expressed a growing awareness of their responsibilities as digital citizens. This expanding perspective of digital citizenship directly resulted from the drama pedagogy's ability to facilitate deeper emotional and social awareness, allowing them to understand their roles in online communities holistically. Carly's reflections demonstrate this shift, as she highlighted how the exercises gave her greater insight into how people think and react in online situations: "It gave me more of an insight into what people are thinking and how they would react in an online situation. We take people's emotions into account." (FG-EPDC).

The drama pedagogy also provided students with practical knowledge about the long-term consequences of their online actions, such as understanding the concept of a digital footprint. Emily's comment reflects this: "I got a better understanding of what a digital footprint or tattoo means" (FG-EPDC). The exploration of these concepts helped students become more mindful of how their actions could affect themselves and others. Carly expanded on this idea, explaining how the exercises made her more self-aware of her digital habits, particularly her tendency to post without thinking. She reflected, "It makes me more self-aware of what I post because I am one of those people who do not think before they post, so I might post something that I think is hilarious, and other people are like, why are you posting this? This isn't funny. It has helped me to be more self-aware of what I post and how that affects other people" (FG-EPDC).

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Finally, Toby's reflection tied together many of the individual insights shared by his peers, emphasising the collective responsibility inherent in digital interactions. The exercises broadened his understanding of the interconnectedness of online participants, leading him to recognise the need to consider the potential impact of his actions for a broader audience. "It has broadened my horizons, and I think that everyone is a character in this. It is not just me or a couple of people; it is everyone. I must consider most people before I do something that could affect them, especially if it is a very negative thing" (FG-EPDC).

This progression from individual self-awareness to recognition of collective responsibility exemplifies how drama pedagogy facilitated a more comprehensive understanding of digital citizenship among the students. The activities allowed them to explore personal and social dynamics and provided a space to critically reflect on the implications of their actions within digital communities. Through this, the students developed a more nuanced and responsible approach to their roles as digital citizens, reflecting the ethical considerations advocated for and discussed in Kikerpill (2021) and Obajemu et al. (2024).

7.4.1 Continuous Learning

When reflecting on the teachers' journey through the observations and reflections, it became clear that all four teachers engaged in continuous professional development and learning. Unpacking this theme is essential for addressing my research question about how teachers in NSW interpret and approach digital citizenship. It demonstrates that continuous learning is essential for them to adjust to digital settings and effectively lead students. The teachers participated in ongoing professional learning during this research, which helped them increase their understanding of digital citizenship as the unit progressed - a process necessary for fostering digitally capable citizens in education (Piceci et al., 2021). By continuously learning, teachers expanded their understanding and refined their approaches, demonstrating how their interpretations of digital citizenship evolved during the study. Their commitment to ongoing learning enhanced their understanding of digital citizenship and equipped them to preparing their students for the democratic responsibility of the digital age

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(Örtegren, 2022). Such learning empowered the teachers to address digital citizenship proactively, reflecting one of my research sub-questions about how teachers' knowledge develops over time. The teachers in this study exemplified this responsibility by continuously engaging in professional development to stay updated with the latest digital trends, opportunities, and potential threats, knowledge they could then pass on to their students.

Ms Skye emphasised the role of teachers as facilitators of discovery, highlighting the need to remain constantly aware and responsive to classroom dynamics. She stated:

I absolutely see them as role models. A great teacher allows them [students] to discover things for themselves. I think the teacher and the drama teacher must be consistently aware of what is happening and steer the conversation toward a positive outcome. As teachers, we think about the way or what Boal would have done if you had used image theatre. (I-CL)

Consistent with Ms Skye, Mrs Elsa expanded on the need for professional learning when emphasising lifelong learning. She argued that teachers should learn as much as students to support the mutual exchange of knowledge and experience. Mrs Elsa also noted that lifelong learning enhanced her ability to teach digital citizenship. As teachers engage in ongoing learning, they become more attuned to the evolving needs of their students in digital spaces. Mrs Elsa's emphasis on lifelong learning stresses the mutual exchange of knowledge between students and educators, which is essential for effective digital citizenship instruction (Piceci et al., 2021).

I totally believe I am a lifelong learner. I learn from them daily and try to acknowledge that, which I think is part of empowerment. When we can learn from each other, it makes the students more willing to participate in learning. Many students will learn by being the teacher and stepping into that role. (I-CL)

Raising digital competence requires a reflective and dynamic learning process, where both teachers and students continuously engage in professional learning and adaptation to digital

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environments (2018). The critical reflection process enabled the teachers to recognise that they, alongside their students, require more than just technical skills; they must also engage thoughtfully with ethical digital behaviours and reflect on social and ethical responsibilities (Freebody & Finneran, 2021a). This idea supports my research focus on how teachers' knowledge and understanding of digital citizenship grow as they engage in reflective practices during the unit. Mrs Thomas' reflection further supports this:

I think we are making good progress because of the large number of resources online. ICT is pretty much part of everyone's classroom now. So, I think the train is going to keep pulling away, and we need to jump on it. We accept ICT as part of a tool in the students' lives. The manner in which students communicate and research is an important part of their lives now, as it is for everybody. I do not know what they will come up with next, but I think it is important for schools and teachers to stay on top of it as much as possible through continuous learning. (I-CL)

By engaging in ongoing professional learning related to ICT and digital citizenship, teachers were able to enhance their own understanding of digital challenges alongside their students. This approach helped them develop strategies to navigate the rapidly evolving digital landscape and also allowed them to become co-learners with their students. Drama pedagogy enabled the teachers to actively participate in the learning process, where they facilitated and modelled discussions that encouraged both critical thinking and personal reflection on digital citizenship. Instead of being passive instructors, the teachers shared the learning journey with their students, fostering a collaborative and dynamic learning environment. This collaboration is central to productive learning environments, as Anderson and Jefferson (2017) emphasise the value of working together to test assumptions and extend knowledge, creating spaces where students and teachers co-construct their learning journeys. Through reflective practices within the drama scenes, the teachers deepened their own understanding of digital citizenship while empowering their students to think critically about their roles in the digital space. This collaborative learning process demonstrates how,

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when integrated into classroom practice, professional learning creates a more engaging and relevant educational environment where teachers and students can grow as informed digital citizens.

The reflections from all teachers highlight that continuous professional learning is essential for them to keep pace with the digital world and is also key in shaping how they approach digital citizenship within their classrooms. Teachers and students could engage meaningfully through a collaborative, co-constructed environment, further developing the reflective and communicative skills essential for digital citizenship (Jefferson & Anderson, 2017; Obajemu et al., 2024). This active learning aligns with my research questions on how teachers interpret and approach digital citizenship. It demonstrates that professional development in real-time classroom settings plays a fundamental role in teachers' capacity to guide their students in navigating the blended human-centred world.

7.4.2 Shared Spaces for Learning

As I reflected on student and teacher experiences, 'shared spaces for learning' emerged as a dominant theme. These physical and virtual spaces allowed students to actively engage in collaborative learning as blended citizens. The drama classroom fostered open communication, mutual respect, and a sense of community among students, which enabled deep engagement with the material and each other. Characterised by inclusivity, safety, and respect, these spaces promoted empowerment through technology integration and collaborative activities. These were crucial elements that Jefferson and Anderson (2017) identified as necessary for creating creative, reflective, and collaborative learning environments. Such elements aligned with the broader understanding of digital citizenship as defined by Choi et al. (2018), where students' roles are cultivated not only in their online interactions but in how they co-construct knowledge within these spaces.

Drama pedagogy uniquely supported the creation of shared spaces where collaborative engagement and the exchange of ideas flowed creatively. Students explored the

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complexities of digital citizenship through collective inquiry and interaction. These shared spaces included the physical surroundings and the inclusive, safe, and respectful atmosphere that fostered empowerment through digital tools and ethical reflection. Heath (2018) argues that fostering such spaces allows learners to engage more deeply with the ethical dimensions of online behaviour and their roles as digital citizens. Within this environment, students are encouraged to actively participate, share diverse perspectives, and engage in open communication, key skills for navigating the digital world responsibly and thoughtfully (Piceci et al., 2021). Drama pedagogy further facilitated students' ability to assess issues collectively as a community, a process Obajemu et al. (Obajemu et al., 2024) outline as critical for building digital competence and citizenship.

The collaborative environment within shared learning spaces supports the free exchange of knowledge, which enhances students' understanding of ethical online behaviour. As Anderson and Jefferson (2017) note, such environments foster safety and mutual respect, ensuring that every student has a voice and contributes to a greater sense of belonging within the group. This collaboration is vital in creating learning spaces that allow for critical reflection and shared knowledge.

In the context of digital citizenship, these shared learning environments served as crucibles for empowerment, where students learnt to apply digital tools thoughtfully and ethically through collaboration, playbuilding, and technology use. The mutual respect I observed in the Drama classroom often cultivated an environment in which every student felt valued, fostering a strong sense of community and belonging, though this may not have been experienced by all participants. This, in turn, enabled both students and teachers to deepen their understanding of digital platforms and online behaviour, instilling the confidence needed to contribute positively to digital spaces.

This focus on collaboration and mutual respect closely aligns with Neelands' (2009) principle of a pedagogic contract, where teachers and students co-create a shared agreement based on trust and collective responsibility. In Neelands's ensemble drama, the classroom itself

becomes a learning community whose social contract underpins pro-social education. By foregrounding trust and shared ownership, ensemble learning supports student agency and strengthens the ethical and relational dimensions at the centre of digital citizenship.

7.4.3 Teacher Reflections on Effectiveness

Teachers highlighted the effectiveness of drama pedagogy in creating shared learning environments that facilitated deeper exploration of digital citizenship. Ms Skye noted progress in students' understanding of online interactions, emphasising the epiphany moments students experienced through collaborative exploration of digital dilemmas:

As a group, they have learned and progressed more, particularly when we explored a lot of those images with the words. There is a whole list of words, and I think that by exploring those words and images, they had an epiphany about what we know about posting and how people respond. The learners understood that they had the choice to block that person, not be part of the conversation, and avoid being bystanders. We explored issues, possibly what was happening in their [students'] personal lives or people that they know of and then brought that into the group collective and had a discussion within themselves. The outcome would be producing the experiences in Forum Theatre, not from a personal perspective but universal. (I-SSL)⁶⁰

Through critical reflection on digital dilemmas as a group, the students developed the tools to navigate complex online environments while considering their personal and social responsibilities (Freebody & Finneran, 2021b; Jefferson & Anderson, 2017). Mrs Elsa noted that although students shared their experiences, they were selective in what they revealed during the playbuilding exercises. The safe environment helped them explore digital dilemmas respectfully, fostering a deeper engagement with the material while reinforcing a sense of control and ownership over their stories. As she described, the students “provided

⁶⁰I indicates data drawn from teacher interviews. SSL refers to the theme Shared Spaces for Learning.

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the exact examples they wanted to play out in the playbuilding from their own experiences,” but were “careful not to reveal too much” (I-SSL).

Mr Simon also outlined the essential role of shared spaces for learning in drama classes, particularly through the lens of forum and Invisible Theatre activities. These techniques enabled an environment where students were encouraged to actively share and discuss their experiences with digital citizenship, leveraging the collective knowledge and insights of the class. In these shared spaces, the abstract concepts of digital citizenship transformed into tangible and relatable experiences. Students actively engaged in playbuilding scenarios that mirrored real-world digital problems, facilitating a direct application of theoretical knowledge to practical situations. This process enhanced their understanding of responsible online behaviour and empowered them to identify and navigate the complexities and ethical considerations of the digital world.

It was Invisible Theatre, to begin with, but then it transformed into Forum Theatre, getting kids to discuss exactly how they could step in in different ways. It worked out nicely because that is what year eight [TeenCitz]⁶¹ was already focused on, and then they could start seeing some of the practical applications and miss some of those pitfalls. There was a level of different effectiveness between the two groups, not so much because of the actors, but because one of the year eight classes was quite difficult. The group were not as open to it. The second group functioned quite effectively, and we were able to participate in the Forum Theatre a bit more. I think that when we work on this program in the future, it should focus on how we can develop some of that relationship with the Drama students before we go into the Forum Theatre. Then, the students will be willing to open up and engage realistically.

(I-SSL)

⁶¹ The school's wellbeing program has been renamed to de-identify the school.

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The variation in openness between groups highlighted the importance of scaffolding and students' prior experience with playbuilding and Boalian drama techniques. Some students required more support or initial relationship-building before fully engaging in Forum Theatre, especially if they were unfamiliar with the form or conventions. This suggests that while Forum Theatre can be highly effective, its transferability relies on adequate scaffolding and students' familiarity with drama conventions, particularly in non-drama or less experienced contexts.

By transforming abstract concepts into physical, relatable experiences through drama, students could internalise the principles of digital citizenship, reflecting on their roles and responsibilities within digital spaces. This experiential learning prepared them to apply these lessons in their everyday digital interactions and cultivated critical digital literacy (Mattson, 2017). These shared learning environments fostered mutual support and collective growth, ensuring that the journey into digital citizenship was not an individual one but a shared experience with their peers and teachers. In doing so, students and teachers navigated digital citizenship's ethical, personal, and social dimensions, reinforcing a collaborative, reflective approach to understanding the blended world.

Conclusion

This chapter explored the impact of using drama pedagogy for digital citizenship education, addressing the key research questions about the approaches, understanding and teacher-student interactions.

Throughout the teaching and learning program, the teachers developed their approaches to teaching digital citizenship during the pandemic, reinforcing the need to foster ethical online behaviour and responsible digital interactions. Boal's theatre techniques, such as Invisible Theatre, Forum Theatre, and Image Theatre, were instrumental in engaging students, developing their critical thinking, and deepening their ethical awareness. These methods enabled students to explore complex social dynamics, consider their roles as digital citizens, and engage in scenarios reflecting real-world online conflicts.

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In addition to the development of critical thinking, empathy, and ethical awareness, several key dispositions from the *Learning Disposition Wheel* (Jefferson & Anderson, 2021) were identified during the program. The following table summarises how drama pedagogy fostered these dispositions in students, supporting their growth as responsible digital citizens.

Table 7.1

Key Dispositions for Effective Digital Citizenship and Collaboration

Disposition	Explanation	Impact (as outlined in the findings)
Focus	The ability to concentrate on tasks and discussions, fostering deeper engagement with complex ideas and self-regulation.	Students displayed sustained focus during playbuilding, mask work and roleplay, reflecting on their digital identities and responsibilities in online spaces.
Grit	Persistence in overcoming challenges, particularly in collaborative settings, and maintaining motivation through difficulties.	Students demonstrated resilience in group discussions, working through disagreements and resolving conflicts during playbuilding activities.
Curiosity	Encouraging inquiry and exploration, leading to a deeper understanding of behaviours and motivations in online contexts.	Drama activities prompted students to ask critical questions about their, and others, online personas and interactions, exploring the motivations behind digital actions.
Think Why and How	Promoting critical reflection on the reasons and consequences of actions, fostering deeper understanding and metacognitive skills.	Reflective activities encouraged students to analyse their behaviours, consider the broader consequences of their digital interactions, and assess ethical implications, enhancing critical thinking and metacognitive awareness.
Make and Express Meaning	Developing the ability to communicate ideas and experiences through creative mediums, enhancing expression and connection.	Students articulated their evolving understanding of citizenship through Drama, reflecting on and connecting their online and offline experiences, enhancing their communication skills and ability to express complex ideas and emotions.
Build New Ideas	Encouraging creativity in generating innovative solutions to digital challenges and interactions.	Students collaboratively developed new approaches to digital issues like online safety, demonstrating creativity in problem-solving.

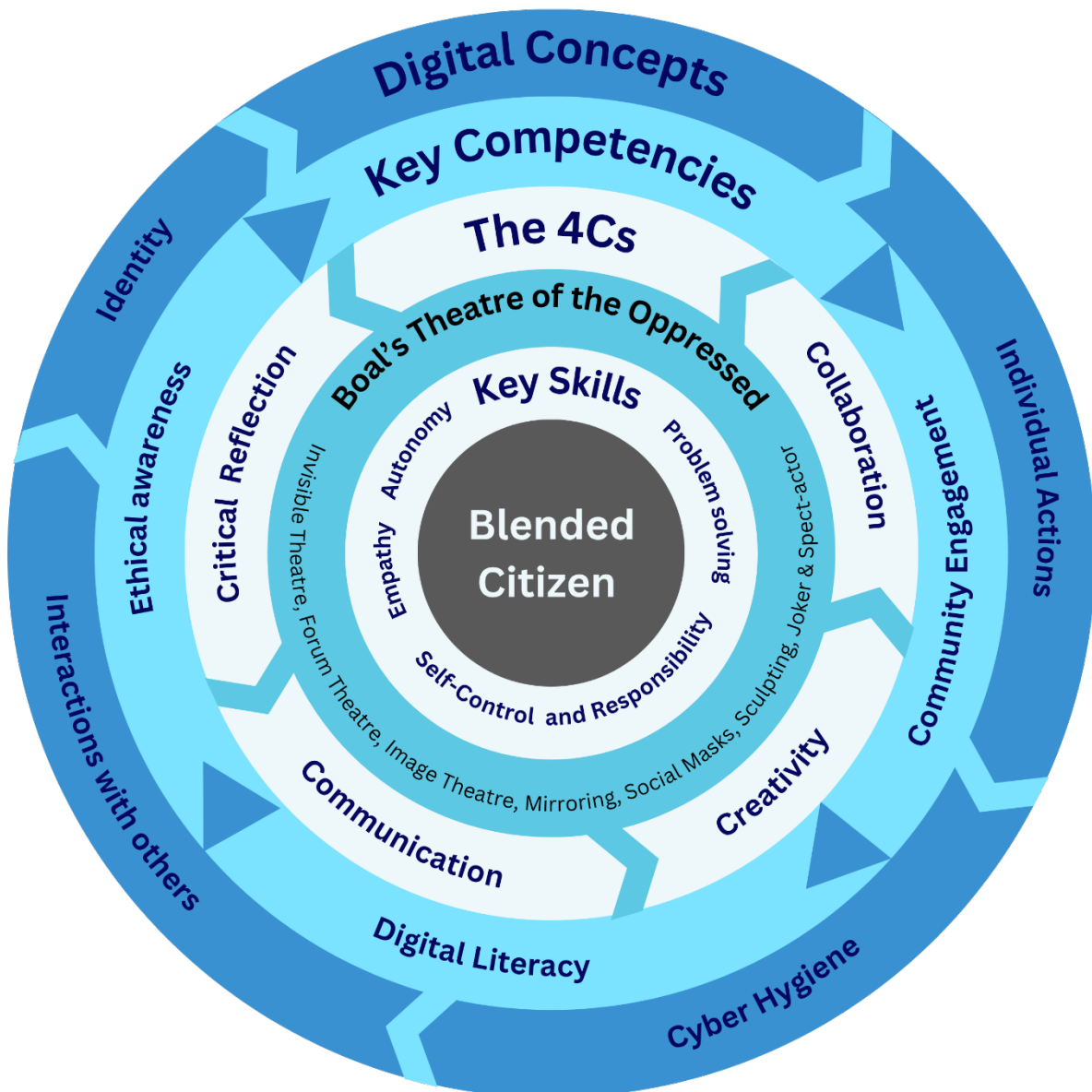
Influence	Fostering leadership and responsibility in shaping peers' understanding and promoting positive engagement in digital spaces.	Through group work, students assumed leadership roles, guiding their peers toward more responsible behaviour in blended online interactions.
Empathy	Cultivating an understanding of others' perspectives crucial for respectful engagement and collaboration.	Roleplay allowed students to explore diverse viewpoints, fostering empathy and a deeper understanding of respectful engagement online.
Teamwork	Enhancing the collaborative skills necessary for effective interaction in the blended world, fostering cooperation and negotiation.	Drama activities reinforced teamwork, negotiation and collective problem-solving, reflecting the collaborative nature of online interactions.

Figure 7.1 below outlines the framework I developed from my findings to illustrate how a 'Blended Citizen' is fostered - an individual equipped with essential skills, digital literacy, and competencies to navigate a blended world. At its core, Boalian theatre forms, including Invisible Theatre, Forum Theatre, Image Theatre, Mirroring, Social Masks, Sculpting, and Roleplay (Boal, 1979), cultivate key skills such as empathy, autonomy, problem solving, self-control, and responsibility . These forms function as experiential learning tools, enabling students in this research to engage with ethical awareness, digital identity, and interpersonal interactions across online and offline contexts. Surrounding these foundational skills, the framework includes the 4Cs of Communication, Collaboration, Creativity, and Critical Reflection, which encompass dispositions such as focus, grit, and curiosity, supporting students in applying these competencies more effectively in both digital and physical worlds (Jefferson & Anderson, 2021). The outer two layers emphasise key digital concepts and competencies identified by participants in this research, including cyber hygiene, digital literacy, identity, and community engagement. These elements highlight the broader societal and ethical responsibilities of a Blended Citizen, reinforcing how digital interactions

necessitate critical reflection, responsible decision-making, and an awareness of the interconnected nature of online and offline experiences.

Figure 7.1

Framework for Developing a Blended Citizen: Integrating Key Skills, Competencies, and Digital Concepts



Collaboration was key in creating reflective learning environments, with students moving from passive learners to engaged citizens. Drama pedagogy broadened students'

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perspectives, encouraging them to critically assess their online interactions and responsibilities.

The teachers also engaged in continuous professional learning, adapting to the evolving digital landscape to better guide their students. This collaborative process, supported by shared learning spaces, fostered mutual respect, collective problem-solving, and confidence in navigating the digital world responsibly.

In conclusion, integrating drama pedagogy within digital citizenship education enhanced students' skills, competencies, and understanding of key digital concepts. The final chapters of my thesis will discuss the broader implications of these findings and the role of drama pedagogy in digital citizenship education.

8 Conclusion

This research sets out to investigate how drama pedagogy can influence student understanding of digital citizenship within a human-centred, blended world. The study is structured around three core areas: teacher and student knowledge of digital citizenship, the role of drama pedagogy in promoting prosocial behaviour for student wellbeing, and the opportunities to embed these approaches in the classroom.

The guiding research questions are:

1. How do teachers in NSW interpret, understand, and approach digital citizenship?
2. In what ways does drama pedagogy impact a student's understanding of citizenship in a human-centred and online world?
3. How do teachers and students interact within the classroom when experiencing and participating in online drama pedagogy?

In this chapter I summarise the findings, discuss the limitations of the study, offer recommendations, consider the broader implications for educational practice and policy, and provide concluding reflections on the significance of this research.

8.1 Interpretation of Findings

The thematic analysis conducted during my research resulted in identifying 14 distinct themes, answering each research question. These themes highlight the various ways that drama pedagogy contributed to the understanding and application of digital citizenship skills during this study. The themes identified include:

- Responsible Use of Technology and Digital Platforms (RUT)
- Integrated Learning (IL)
- General Focus on Digital Citizenship (GFDC)
- Continuous Learning (CL)
- Shared Spaces for Learning (SSL)

Conclusion

- Expansion of Perspectives on Digital Citizenship (EPDC)
- Skills and Attributes Development (SAD)
- Empathy and Understanding (EU)
- Self-Expression and Discovery (SED)
- Understanding Emotions (UE)
- Problem-Solving Skills (PSS)
- Boal Theatre (BT)
- Collaboration (C)
- Adequately Engaging (AE).

These findings demonstrate that for these participants, drama pedagogy offered a comprehensive and holistic approach to digital citizenship education, moving beyond the traditional focus on technical proficiency. Through drama's embodied and experiential process, the students in my research engaged in reflective and empathetic interactions, cultivating a deeper understanding of their roles and responsibilities as digital citizens. Drama pedagogy did more than teach students about digital tools; it prompted them to critically reflect on how their actions, decisions, and behaviours impact others both online and offline.

This reflective engagement is particularly relevant today, as the boundaries between human interaction and digital communication are increasingly interconnected. For example, a student might be maintaining one friendship face-to-face while simultaneously engaging with another friend through a smartwatch or phone, navigating multiple social contexts at once. Drama pedagogy encourages students to explore these blurred boundaries through creative and immersive exercises that uncover identity, empathy, and ethical behaviour complexities in digital environments. By embodying characters or participating in scenarios that reflect real-life challenges, the students adopted different perspectives, allowing them to experience firsthand the emotional and ethical dilemmas they may encounter online.

Conclusion

The collaborative nature of drama pedagogy also fostered a shared learning experience that extended beyond individual reflection. I observed students collectively navigate challenges, share insights, and develop problem-solving skills, all while building a community of practice centred on responsible digital citizenship. The role of teachers was vital in guiding these discussions, as they helped students connect their dramatic experiences to broader issues such as digital ethics, self-expression, and community responsibility.

The implications of these findings for curriculum design are clear; schools should adopt a more integrated and comprehensive approach that addresses digital life's technical and social-emotional dimensions by using drama pedagogy and mandating digital citizenship concepts in all syllabuses. This ensures that our students are proficient in using digital tools and equipped to navigate the ethical and emotional challenges inherent in digitally blended interactions.

In the following sections, these findings will be examined in relation to each research question, offering a detailed analysis of how drama pedagogy contributes to shaping informed, responsible, and empathetic digital citizens. This approach broadens the scope of digital citizenship education, placing greater emphasis on emotional intelligence, ethical decision-making, and reflective practice in preparing students to navigate the complexities of the digital age.

Table 8.1

Preliminary Mapping of Themes to Research Questions

How do teachers in NSW interpret, understand, and approach digital citizenship?

- Theme 1: Responsible Use of Technology and Digital Platforms
- Theme 2: Integrated Learning

What issues and approaches had the teachers previously taken when addressing digital citizenship before the research?

- Theme 3: General Focus on Digital Citizenship

Does a teacher's knowledge and understanding of digital citizenship develop throughout the teaching and learning program?

- Theme 4: Continuous Learning

How can drama pedagogy impact a student's understanding of citizenship in a human-centred online world?

- Theme 5: Shared Spaces for Learning
- Theme 6: Expansion of Perspectives on Digital Citizenship
- Theme 7: Skills and Attributes Development

How do the students change the way they interact with others when learning in the blended human-centred and online world?

- Theme 8: Empathy and Understanding
- Theme 9: Self-Expression and Discovery

How do students reflect upon triggers, techniques or strategies that may affect their wellbeing negatively or positively through drama pedagogy?

- Theme 10: Understanding Emotions
- Theme 11: Problem-Solving Skills

How do teachers and students interact within the classroom when experiencing and participating in drama pedagogy?

- Theme 12: Boal Theatre

How do the students and teachers interact, both verbally and through body language, when participating in drama pedagogy in the blended world?

- Theme 13: Collaboration

How well do teachers and students engage with the curriculum-aligned approach to digital citizenship?

- Theme 14: Adequately Engaging

Note. Table 8.1 lists the core themes identified through thematic analysis, linking each theme to the corresponding research questions. The visual summary provides a concise interpretation of how these findings address the study's overarching questions.

8.2 Research Question One

The first research question was: **How do teachers in NSW interpret, understand, and approach digital citizenship?** Two key themes emerged from the analysis: responsible use of technology and digital platforms and integrated learning. The findings indicated that teachers in NSW perceived digital citizenship as a vital aspect of responsible technology use, particularly in light of the increased reliance on digital platforms during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. This period of intensified digital engagement changed how students and teachers interact with technology, driving teachers to identify the need to further embed digital citizenship education into ongoing learning.

The teachers in this study viewed their role as more than imparting technical skills; they saw themselves as actively contributing to students' understanding of ethical digital engagement. Digital citizenship is an evolving, integrated learning process where social norms and digital behaviours intersect to foster respect for diversity (Dillenbourg, 2004; Neelands, 2009; Pangrazio & Sefton-Green, 2021). This perspective positioned digital citizenship not as a stand-alone subject but as a cross-curricular principle embedded across key learning areas. Through drama pedagogy, the teachers at all four research sites expressed that students engaged in a more nuanced, human-centred exploration of digital citizenship, allowing for a deeper connection with complex digital and societal issues.

The research also indicated that these teachers recognised digital citizenship as both an ethical and practical necessity. In their expanded role as educators, teachers viewed delivering digital citizenship content as a core component of their role, particularly given students' increased exposure to online environments. The transition to digital learning during the COVID-19 pandemic made this even more urgent, with students spending more time online. Consequently, the teachers embraced the challenge of moving beyond technical competence and focused on promoting awareness, empathy, and ethical decision-making for their students.

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This interpretation aligns with research from Kansu and Oksuz (2019), who examine the role teachers play in shaping responsible digital citizens. Other studies, including those by Martin et al. (2019) and Dede Bali and Dasdemir (2019), highlight that educators globally see digital citizenship encompassing both technical proficiency and promoting ethical online behaviours. This research expands on these insights by showing how teachers in NSW approached digital citizenship holistically, blending experiential learning, with social and emotional learning, through the use of Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979).

Through drama pedagogy, teachers created reflective, immersive environments where students confronted real-world digital dilemmas. These experiences helped students internalise social norms, ethical considerations, and respect for diversity in meaningful ways. Boal's techniques allowed students to explore different perspectives and navigate the complexities of digital ethics. As a result, drama pedagogy offered a unique and practical approach to teaching digital citizenship, moving beyond technical competence to help students become more responsible, empathetic, and informed citizens in the blended world.

8.2.1 Research Question One A

The first sub-research question asked: **What issues and approaches had teachers previously taken when addressing digital citizenship before the research?** The findings revealed that before the study, teachers approached digital citizenship with an adequate or general focus, covering core topics such as cyberbullying, online safety, privacy, and managing digital footprints. These elements were taught within general digital citizenship education, often framed as a checklist of behaviours to avoid or follow.

The findings contributed to the existing literature by showing that drama pedagogy shifted this general approach to one that was more personalised and nuanced. Teachers recognised that drama provided a deeper, more engaging platform for students to explore their roles as digital citizens. Instead of focusing solely on preventative measures or general

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digital guidelines, drama enabled students to reflect on their own digital behaviours in a way that connected to their personal experiences and emotions. This shift from a general to a personalised approach allowed for a richer, more meaningful exploration of digital citizenship, helping students understand the broader implications of their actions in online spaces.

8.2.2 Research Question One B

The second sub-research question asked: **Does a teacher's knowledge and understanding of digital citizenship develop throughout the teaching and learning program?** The data confirmed that continuous learning alongside the students or through professional development was crucial in helping teachers keep their understanding of digital citizenship current and relevant. As digital citizenship was a dynamic concept that evolved with technological advancements, ongoing professional development allowed teachers to adapt their knowledge and skills in line with these changes.

The findings were consistent with the broader literature, which asserts that teachers' perceptions and understanding of digital citizenship should evolve over time, particularly as new technologies emerge (Von Gillern et al., 2024). Teachers in this study acknowledged that their knowledge and approach to digital citizenship expanded as they engaged with the teaching and learning program alongside the students, reflecting a deeper understanding of the complexities of the blended world. Teachers and students recognised this ongoing development as a mutual process, particularly in light of the ever-changing digital landscape.

The results also aligned with research from Djudin and Kartono (2021), who found that teachers must continuously update their knowledge, skills, and values related to digital citizenship to remain effective. Although that study took place in Indonesia, the core idea of continuous learning was universal, emphasising the need for teachers to stay informed about emerging digital issues. The findings of this study added to the literature by showing that continuous learning created a mutual exchange of knowledge and experiences between

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the teachers and students, enriching the overall approach to digital citizenship education.

This ongoing dialogue promoted a more collaborative learning environment where teachers and students contributed to the evolving understanding of responsible digital engagement.

8.3 Research Question Two

The second research question asked: **How can drama pedagogy impact a student's understanding of citizenship in a human-centred online world?** The findings revealed that drama pedagogy played a key role in shaping students' understanding of digital citizenship by creating shared spaces for learning. These shared spaces fostered collaboration, expanded students' perspectives, and encouraged the development of key skills and attributes related to responsible digital citizenship. Drama pedagogy, through a safe and collaborative environment, supported students in exploring complex issues and building mutual respect through open communication.

This research built on existing literature by demonstrating that drama pedagogy offered a unique and safe space where students can engage in collective learning, promoting an atmosphere of trust and empowerment (O'Connor & Freebody, 2022). The findings suggested that these environments encouraged students to communicate effectively and collaborate on performances or problem-solving tasks, participating in processes through the 4Cs capabilities (Jefferson & Anderson, 2017). Students were able to express their ideas, listen to others, and work together through these shared learning spaces, leading to an increased understanding of digital citizenship and its role within a human-centred blended world.

The findings also contributed to the current understanding of drama pedagogy's potential to expand students' perspectives on digital citizenship. Drama allowed students to engage with different viewpoints, explore how they and others present themselves online and reflect on their digital interactions' ethical and emotional implications. Boal's Image Theatre and Forum Theatre, as part of the *Theatre of the Oppressed* (Boal, 1979), provided an effective method

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for students to engage with these issues. These techniques encouraged students to reflect on their online behaviours and consider how others represent themselves in digital spaces.

Drama pedagogy contributed to developing skills and attributes essential for digital citizenship. Students reported that participating in the drama activities improved their understanding of online situations, enabling them to exercise greater self-control and consideration when interacting in blended spaces. The reflective nature of drama pedagogy, where students were encouraged to think critically about their own digital behaviours, aligned with research suggesting that theatre and performance can motivate students to become more aware of essential concepts (Zakopoulos et al., 2023b).

This study adds to the growing body of literature by demonstrating that drama pedagogy expands students' perspectives and promotes the development of key digital citizenship skills. By creating spaces where students feel empowered to express themselves, collaborate with others, and reflect on their actions, drama pedagogy provides a practical approach to teaching digital citizenship in a human-centred, blended world.

8.3.1 Research Question Two A

The first sub-research question asked: **How do the students change the way they interact with others when learning in the blended human-centred online world?** The findings showed that drama pedagogy improved students' empathy and understanding while enhancing their self-expression and discovery as a result of this research. Teachers and students consistently observed that the use of drama, particularly Boal's theatre techniques, such as Image Theatre and Roleplaying, allowed students to consider others' perspectives more deeply. These approaches helped students develop a more empathetic understanding of the complexities of online interactions, as they stepped into the shoes of others, gaining insight into various viewpoints.

Drama pedagogy, with its focus on experiential learning, supported critical reflection and communication skills, two essential components of the 4Cs (Jefferson & Anderson, 2017).

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Students demonstrated improved communication and reflective abilities as they engaged in collaborative activities. Learning in a blended human-centred and online environment fostered these skills by allowing students to reflect on their perspectives and experiences, enriching their understanding of online behaviours.

The findings also revealed a noticeable improvement in students' self-expression and discovery. Drama pedagogy, particularly through Invisible Theatre, gave students a safe space to share their thoughts, confront biases, and advocate for themselves and others. This approach enabled students to express their feelings and thoughts freely, promoting creativity and communication. The integration of imaginative activities, such as creating scenarios and narratives, encouraged students to explore their emotions and ideas, enhancing their confidence and ability to communicate effectively in the blended world. In addition to exploring students' communication and interaction in the blended space, this study also examined how drama pedagogy affected their emotional wellbeing.

8.3.2 Research Question Two B

The second sub-research question asked: **How do students reflect upon triggers, techniques, or strategies that may affect their wellbeing negatively or positively through drama pedagogy?** The findings demonstrated that drama pedagogy positively influenced students by helping them understand their emotions and improve their problem-solving skills. Drama provided students with a structured and safe environment where they could reflect on their emotional reactions and responses, allowing them to consider how various situations might impact their emotional wellbeing.

The findings built on existing literature by demonstrating that Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* gave students opportunities to engage in storytelling, which created a platform for them to share personal experiences and explore emotions more deeply (Boal, 1979). By sharing their stories, students not only gained insights into their emotional responses but also developed a better understanding of the emotions and perspectives of others.

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The findings also indicated that drama pedagogy enhanced problem-solving skills. By exploring different perspectives in various dramatic scenarios, students learnt to approach problems from multiple angles, encouraging reflective thinking and creative solutions. The collaborative nature of drama allowed students to work together to resolve challenges, improving their ability to navigate both online and offline environments.

8.4 Research Question Three

The third research question asked: **How do teachers and students interact within the classroom when experiencing and participating in drama pedagogy?** The findings revealed that interactions between teachers and students during online drama pedagogy were shaped by Boal's theatre techniques, which fostered an interactive and reflective learning environment. Techniques such as Image Theatre, Forum Theatre, Roleplaying, Sculpting, and the broader framework of the *Theatre of the Oppressed* (Boal, 1979) provided students with tools to engage deeply with the material, reflecting critically on their roles as digital citizens.

A key aspect of these interactions was the discussions that followed each performance. After students presented their scenes or scenarios, teachers took on the role of facilitators, prompting students to critically reflect on the performances and explore the underlying themes related to digital citizenship. These discussions allowed students to unpack their decisions, question their assumptions, and consider the broader ethical implications of their actions in both the performances and in real digital spaces. The teachers would often ask questions like, "How might this situation play out differently online?" or "What choices could this character make to handle the conflict more ethically?"

The role of the Joker was central to these interactions, and was sometimes played by the teacher, sometimes the student. Acting as a mediator between the actors and the audience, the Joker encouraged students to question the performances and explore alternative solutions. This role facilitated an open dialogue, where students could step back and

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examine the dynamics of their performances from different perspectives. The Joker's interventions were essential in helping students consider multiple viewpoints, deepening their understanding of the complexities of online interactions and the ethical challenges they might face in digital environments. Even outside of the Joker role, the teachers regularly prompted and encouraged students to challenge each other's viewpoints, asking questions that pushed them to reflect on their own experiences and the ethical dimensions of online behaviour. This interaction was not limited to teacher-led questioning, with students frequently prompting their peers with their own questions, sparking discussions that enriched the learning experience. These interactions helped students develop critical reflection and empathy as they worked through various digital dilemmas.

The playbuilding process played a vital role in learning, engagement, and retention. The teachers and students collaborated to create scenes that reflected real-life challenges in digital citizenship, exploring themes such as online privacy, cyberbullying, and digital ethics. During playbuilding, students workshopped and experimented with different approaches and outcomes, receiving feedback from peers and teachers. This hands-on, iterative process allowed students to revise and refine their performances and consider alternate perspectives, which deepened their engagement with the material. Sculpting and Image Theatre provided a powerful way for students to visualise abstract concepts like empathy and ethical decision-making, making the learning experience concrete and emotionally resonant.

The findings expanded the theoretical framework of this study by showing how Boal's theatre techniques, combined with critical discussions and the Joker's facilitation, created a richer, more collaborative classroom environment. The interactive nature of these activities made the learning process more dynamic, encouraging students to think deeply about digital citizenship through performance, feedback, and reflection. These elements fostered a deeper sense of empathy, critical thinking, and ethical awareness among students, aligning with the broader goals of digital citizenship education.

8.4.1 Research Question Three A

The first sub-research question asked: **How do the students and teachers interact, both verbally and through body language when participating in drama pedagogy in the blended world?** Observations revealed that interactions between students and teachers were highly collaborative, with verbal and non-verbal communication playing an essential role in the learning process. The collaborative nature of drama pedagogy was central to its success in teaching digital citizenship, as students and teachers engaged in a co-creative process, developing performances, solving problems, and exploring complex scenarios together.

A key feature of these interactions was body language and supportive movements, which fostered a sense of inclusivity and mutual encouragement. Teachers used encouraging body language, gestures like nodding, open postures, and guiding movements, creating a supportive atmosphere where students felt comfortable participating. This non-verbal communication helped to reinforce verbal feedback, allowing students to feel more confident as they engaged with challenging concepts related to digital citizenship. Students also mirrored these supportive behaviours, using gestures to encourage one another during group activities and performances, further strengthening the collaborative environment.

The participatory nature of drama pedagogy was evident when all students actively participated in the activities. Teachers ensured that every student was involved, guiding them through verbal prompts and subtle body language cues. This full participation was essential to fostering an atmosphere of shared responsibility, where students were responsible for their own learning and supported their peers in exploring ideas and ethical dilemmas. Non-verbal interactions, such as shared eye contact, physical proximity, and mirroring movements, helped to build trust and enhance collaboration within the group.

Drama pedagogy promoted a collaborative learning environment where students were encouraged to actively listen, share ideas, and work toward common goals. Both verbal and

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non-verbal communication played a role in helping students engage more deeply with digital citizenship concepts. The cooperative dynamics allowed students to express their understanding and navigate ethical challenges with greater empathy and reflection. Teachers facilitated this by creating a space where students felt empowered to contribute, using words and body language to encourage engagement and make the learning experience inclusive and dynamic.

8.4.2 Research Question Three B

The second sub-research question asked: **How well do teachers and students engage with the curriculum-aligned approach to digital citizenship?** The observations revealed that while students initially demonstrated reluctance, their engagement with the teaching and learning program to improve digital citizenship grew substantially over the duration of the unit. At first, some students were hesitant to participate in the research because of the topic; however, as the lessons progressed, all students began to actively participate and engage with the content.

Teachers played an active role in encouraging this shift of engagement. They consistently used open-ended questions and facilitated discussions that drew students into the material, allowing them to explore digital citizenship concepts in an interactive and engaging way. By creating a safe and supportive learning environment, the teachers helped students overcome their initial reluctance, leading to more enthusiastic participation as the students gained confidence. The collaborative nature of drama pedagogy, with opportunities to engage in roleplay, Forum Theatre, and other techniques, fostered a stronger connection to the material and increased students' motivation to participate.

All the teachers and students in this research outlined that they preferred the drama-based approach over the more rules-based or contract-focused methods that had previously been used in their schools. The teachers noted that past efforts to teach digital citizenship often relied on enforcing rules or outlining consequences; this approach had been less effective in

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fostering genuine understanding or personal investment among students. In contrast, drama pedagogy provided a more immersive and reflective learning experience, enabling students to engage deeply with digital citizenship concepts rather than simply following set rules.

Students' enthusiasm grew as they realised the benefits of engaging with the material through drama. By participating in performances, collaborating with peers, and receiving feedback, they could reflect critically on real-world challenges related to digital citizenship. This hands-on approach enabled students to explore solutions to complex issues in a way that felt both meaningful and relevant to their everyday lives. As their confidence and enjoyment increased, so did their willingness to engage deeply with the lesson content.

Teachers also observed that drama pedagogy fostered a higher level of sustained engagement than previous methods, saying that students appeared less distracted and demonstrated a stronger understanding of digital citizenship concepts, taking ownership of their decision-making and creative expression in the process.

Overall, drama pedagogy enhanced student participation and encouraged a deeper and more sustained engagement with digital citizenship. This method allowed students to explore their understanding of the issues practically and meaningfully, resulting in a more profound grasp of their actions' ethical and social implications in the blended world.

8.5 Limitations of the Study

The first limitation of my research related to the qualitative methodology used. While this approach provided an in-depth understanding of how drama pedagogy influenced the promotion of digital citizenship, it was inherently subjective (Lundberg et al., 2023). The reliance on teacher interviews, student responses, and observational data meant that the findings were, to some extent, shaped by my interpretations and experiences. Though a layered, multi-modal interpretive approach and the use of multiple data sources were employed to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, the subjectivity of

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qualitative methods remained a limitation when compared to objective quantitative approaches.

A second limitation concerned the small sample size. Initially, the study proposed including five schools in the case study; however, the SERAP process of the NSW Department of Education mandated that only four schools could be involved in the research. This meant that the interviews were conducted with just four teachers, limiting the ability to achieve saturation, the point at which no new information or themes emerged from the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This restriction may have constrained the diversity of experiences and perspectives captured among Drama teachers across different contexts. A larger sample size could have captured a broader range of experiences and provided a more comprehensive view of how teachers implemented drama pedagogy in digital citizenship education.

A third limitation related to the scope of the schools included in the study, which focused exclusively on NSW Public High Schools. I made this decision to gain insights specifically from the government sector, where teachers and students often encountered unique challenges related to digital citizenship. Public schools can stereotypically have a more diverse student population with a range of socioeconomic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds, making them a valuable setting for exploring how teachers could apply drama pedagogy in teaching digital citizenship. The exclusion of non-government schools from the study may, however, have limited the transferability of the findings, as the experiences and approaches in private or independent schools could have differed. Including non-government schools could have provided a broader perspective on how different educational contexts impacted the implementation of drama pedagogy in digital citizenship education.

A fourth limitation related to the transferability of the findings. Some of my observations were made during the COVID-19 pandemic, a period of unusual educational conditions, including remote and hybrid learning environments. These unique circumstances may have influenced the teacher and student behaviours in ways not representative of typical classroom

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interactions. Fortunately, the research could continue despite the pandemic, with some interviews and observations conducted virtually. While this virtual format presented its challenges, it allowed the study to proceed during widespread disruptions. It also provided a unique opportunity to see how digital citizenship unfolded in online and blended learning environments.

A fifth limitation concerns the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' perspectives within the study. Due to the selected case study schools and the primary focus of this research, the study did not predominantly engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student or teacher perspectives, as the participating schools had few identified Aboriginal students. This represents a significant limitation, as these voices are vital to shaping citizenship education. Future research must be undertaken in genuine partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and drawing on Indigenous research methodologies including storytelling, truth-telling, and amplifying community voices. Such community-led engagement could provide valuable insights that parallel digital citizenship education, where students must learn to question whose voices are heard and whose are silenced, and develop the critical and ethical skills to navigate these dynamics with care and respect.

8.5.1 Recommendations

The first recommendation is that the NSW Department of Education reconsider its current ban on mobile phones in schools (Carr-Gregg et al., 2023). NESA should also reevaluate how they have framed the capabilities and priorities related to digital citizenship across the curriculum, given its crucial role in preparing students to thrive in today's highly connected world (NESA, 2024a). Both the NSW Department of Education and NESA should explore the use of drama pedagogy to teach digital citizenship across all subjects. This recommendation stems from the idea that when used appropriately, mobile phones can offer valuable learning opportunities and responsible digital engagement. Instead of outright banning digital devices, schools could use drama pedagogy to engage students in exploring the ethical

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implications of technology use. Through drama, students are encouraged to reflect on their behaviours and make more thoughtful decisions within digital spaces, providing a structured framework to approach the ethical dimensions of their digital actions.

The second recommendation is to reframe our understanding and use of the terminology 'online' and 'offline' interactions. As my study has shown, today's students exist in a world where the lines between digital and physical interactions are interconnected. Even during face-to-face conversations, we can connect virtually through devices like phones or smartwatches. Many homes now feature AI assistants that help with simple tasks and daily activities, such as turning on lights or controlling heating, making the concept of being fully 'offline' increasingly irrelevant, except in rural or disconnected communities. Educational policies, sectors and the curriculum should reflect this reality, moving away from outdated distinctions between online and offline and embrace the blended world.

The third recommendation is to expand the use of Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979) techniques across different subjects, recognising its potential to enhance students' understanding of digital citizenship. Techniques such as Image Theatre and Forum Theatre can be used across various key learning areas to help students engage with ethical dilemmas and real-world scenarios (Babbage, 2004; Boal, 1979). Teachers in different subjects can encourage open discussions, group activities, and reflective exercises, helping students critically reflect on their role as digital citizens while addressing their learning outcomes.

The fourth recommendation is to increase professional learning opportunities for teachers focusing on digital citizenship. Professional learning could include micro-learning, online courses, conferences, or workshops that respond to the evolving landscape of technology and changing ways of interacting and learning. Providing targeted programs would help teachers build the confidence and pedagogical understanding needed to use drama-based and participatory strategies effectively, whether in Drama or other subjects. The u.b.do program offers one example of how drama-based pedagogies can be used to teach digital

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citizenship through reflection, dialogue, and performance. Its use is determined by individual schools, is not currently mandated or endorsed, and, as it was written for a previous version of the syllabus, any future adaptation would depend on curriculum reform and the focus of the NSW Department of Education's Creative Arts curriculum team. Continuous professional learning for teachers is essential, as it equips them with up-to-date knowledge and strategies to teach digital citizenship in ways that resonate with students and prepare them for the challenges of the blended world.

The fifth recommendation is for future researchers to explore the quantitative impact of drama pedagogy on digital citizenship education. While I focused on qualitative methods, future research could measure specific outcomes, such as empathy, problem-solving, and decision-making skills, on a larger scale. Further research could also examine the role of AI in digital citizenship education, which remains an increasingly relevant factor but was beyond the scope of my study.

8.5.2 Implications

My research findings reinforce the critical role a teacher plays in shaping responsible digital citizens. Teachers are not just facilitators of knowledge but are also role models for ethical digital behaviour, guiding students through the complexities of navigating the blended world. As students increasingly use and interact with technology, the education sector must provide updated advice for teachers, resources for students, and a curriculum that reflects these realities, emphasising empathy, ethical decision-making, and responsible digital citizenship to support teachers.

A further implication of my research is the benefit of integrating digital citizenship into the broader curriculum. As technology becomes more embedded in students' lives, teaching them how to navigate digital spaces with critical thinking and ethical awareness is essential. Drama pedagogy has proven to be an effective tool for developing these skills, offering students a hands-on approach to understanding digital citizenship. These implications sit

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within a broader shift in everyday interaction. Communication, identity play, and decision-making are increasingly shaped by networked and algorithmic environments, and the ethical questions students meet in school are continuous with life beyond school. The COVID-19 period accelerated this shift, reshaping classrooms as blended spaces and changing teachers' work. The disruption exposed the need for adaptable pedagogies and also showed drama's capacity to sustain connection, empathy, and collaboration when learning moved between physical and online contexts.

Another key implication of this study is that Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979) provides a structured yet flexible framework for engaging students in ethical reflection. By creating safe spaces for students to share their experiences, my research has demonstrated that drama pedagogy creates a more inclusive and equitable learning environment where students feel empowered to confront biases and stand up for marginalised voices (Babbage, 2004; Bhukhanwala, 2014; Boal, 1979; Robinson, 2016). These safe environments also promote collaboration between students and teachers, essential for deepening the learning process and encouraging students to take ownership of their digital actions.

Finally, my findings suggest that drama pedagogy has potential beyond the drama classroom, making it an effective tool for promoting critical reflection and active learning across the curriculum. This research calls for a more holistic approach to digital citizenship education, where students are taught technical skills and are equipped to engage ethically and empathetically in online spaces in collaboration with peers and teachers. Beyond classroom practice, these implications also point to the wider conditions of digitally blended life. Digital engagement is shaped by education and by political and ideological forces, including the influence of profit-driven corporations and the policies that regulate, or fail to regulate, them. Bringing Boal's concepts of "oppressor" and "oppressed" (Boal, 1979) into dialogue with these networked contexts highlights pressing questions: in corporate-mediated online spaces, who holds power and whose voices are diminished? Situating drama pedagogy against this broader backdrop strengthens the argument for equipping students

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with critical literacies that extend beyond individual responsibility to interrogate the structures that shape their digital worlds.

8.5.3 Summary

The primary contribution of this thesis is the *Framework for Developing a Blended Citizen*, illustrated in **Figure 7.1**. This framework synthesises the thematic analysis into a conceptual model that connects drama pedagogy, digital citizenship, and student wellbeing. It integrates four interrelated key digital concepts: Identity, Interactions with Others, Individual Actions, and Cyber Hygiene. Together these elements describe the qualities of a human-centred digital citizen. It also connects key skills such as empathy, autonomy, self-control, and problem-solving with Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* conventions, the 4Cs capabilities of creativity, communication, collaboration, and critical reflection, and broader digital concepts and competencies. The model offers a coherent way of understanding how drama pedagogy develops ethical awareness and relational capacity across digital and physical contexts, positioning students as active, reflective, and responsible participants in the blended world. These relationships were evident throughout the study, as teachers and students enacted the framework's principles through their classroom practice and reflection.

This thesis explored the influence of drama pedagogy on students' wellbeing and their understanding of digital citizenship in a blended world. My study aimed to address several key research questions, including how teachers interpret and approach digital citizenship, the impact of drama pedagogy on students' understanding, and how interactions within the classroom, both verbal and non-verbal, shape the learning experience.

Several key themes emerged: responsible technology use, collaboration, and empathy. The research showed that drama pedagogy was an effective tool for fostering critical reflection, problem-solving, and emotional intelligence. Techniques from Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979), including Image Theatre and Forum Theatre, provided opportunities for

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students to critically discuss and roleplay ethical digital behaviours, enhancing their understanding of their actions and interactions online.

The findings demonstrate the potential for drama pedagogy to extend beyond its traditional subject boundaries, offering a versatile approach for promoting digital citizenship education. Through collaboration and ethical reflection, drama-based activities can help students become more engaged, thoughtful, human-centred blended citizens. My study suggests that integrating drama pedagogy into the curriculum could offer a more comprehensive approach to digital citizenship education, better preparing and equipping students for the complexities of modern digital life.

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10 Appendices

Appendix 1 - Ethics Documents

1a: University Approval



Research Integrity & Ethics Administration
HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 20 January 2021

Prof Michael Anderson
School of Education and Social Work Research Operations; Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Email: michael.anderson@sydney.edu.au

Dear Michael,

The University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) has considered your application. I am pleased to inform you that after consideration of your response, your project has been approved.

Details of the approval are as follows:

Project No.: 2020/852
Project Title: Human-centred and online citizens: a study of digital citizenship through drama pedagogy.
Authorised Personnel: Anderson Michael; Freebody Kelly; Ricketts-Horvat Cathryn
Approval Period: 20/01/2021 – 20/01/2025
First Annual Report Due: 20/01/2022

Documents Approved:

Date Uploaded	Version Number	Document Name
27/12/2020	Version 2	Clean PIS carer v2
27/12/2020	Version 2	Clean PIS student v2
27/12/2020	Version 2	Clean PIS teacher v2
27/12/2020	Version 2	EOI survey v2
11/11/2020	Version 1	Student consent form
11/11/2020	Version 1	Parentcarer consent form
11/11/2020	Version 1	teacher consent form
11/11/2020	Version 1	School EOI form - on DoE official survey platform
04/11/2020	Version 1	Focus group and interview questions

Condition/s of Approval

- Research must be conducted according to the approved proposal.
- An annual progress report must be submitted to the Ethics Office on or before the anniversary of approval and on completion of the project.
- You must report as soon as practicable anything that might warrant review of ethical approval of the project including:
 - Serious or unexpected adverse events (which should be reported within 72 hours).
 - Unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.
- Any changes to the proposal must be approved prior to their implementation (except where an amendment is undertaken to eliminate *immediate* risk to participants).

Appendices

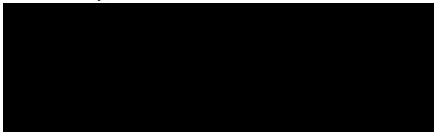


- Personnel working on this project must be sufficiently qualified by education, training and experience for their role, or adequately supervised. Changes to personnel must be reported and approved.
- Personnel must disclose any actual or potential conflicts of interest, including any financial or other interest or affiliation, as relevant to this project.
- Data and primary materials must be retained and stored in accordance with the relevant legislation and University guidelines.
- Ethics approval is dependent upon ongoing compliance of the research with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*, the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*, applicable legal requirements, and with University policies, procedures and governance requirements.
- The Ethics Office may conduct audits on approved projects.
- The Chief Investigator has ultimate responsibility for the conduct of the research and is responsible for ensuring all others involved will conduct the research in accordance with the above.

This letter constitutes ethical approval only.

Please contact the Ethics Office should you require further information or clarification.

Sincerely,



Dr Haryana Dillon
Chair
Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC 3)

The University of Sydney of Sydney HRECs are constituted and operate in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research \(2018\)](#) and the NHMRC's [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research \(2018\)](#)

1b: Participant Information Statement Parent/Carer



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Human-centred and online citizens: A study of digital citizenship through drama pedagogy.

PARENTAL INFORMATION STATEMENT

(1) What is this study about?

Your child is invited to take part in a research study about their ability to understand and reflect on their roles as citizens in both the online and offline world. Using drama methods from Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed, they will explore different perspectives and scenarios to reflect upon their behaviour when using technology and when interacting with others in a technologically advancing world. Participating in this research will not alter your child's ability to meet syllabus expectations for the Record of School Achievement (RoSA). All classroom work for this research addresses standard NSW syllabus outcomes from the drama course objectives of making, performing and appreciating.

Your child has been invited to participate in this study because their school was selected through an Expression of interest (EOI) process with the NSW Department of Education to complete this study. This Participant Information Statement tells you about the research study. Knowing what is involved will help you decide if you want to let your child take part in the research. Please read this sheet carefully and ask questions about anything that you don't understand or want to know more about.

Participation in this research study is voluntary.

By giving your consent, you are telling us that you:

- ✓ Understand what you have read.
- ✓ Agree for your child to take part in the research study as outlined below.
- ✓ Agree to the use of your child's personal information as described.

You will be given a copy of this Parental Information Statement to keep.

(2) Who is running the study?

The study is being carried out by the following researchers:

- Cathryn Ricketts-Horvat, 7-12 Creative Arts Advisor of the NSW Department of Education.

Cathryn Ricketts-Horvat is conducting this study as the basis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at The University of Sydney. This will take place under the supervision of Professor Michael Anderson, Professor of Education (Arts and Creativity).

(3) What will the study involve?

Your child will be asked to complete a unit of work aligned to the NSW drama syllabus that enables them to undertake a series of drama games and activities exploring and unpacking digital citizenship themes and issues. As this work is aligned to the regular NSW syllabus, their participation in the research will allow them to continue to meet the expected syllabus outcomes, while exploring digital citizenship through Boal's theatre methods. When participating in their traditional classroom learning, your child will be observed by the researcher and may be invited to participate in a focus group at the end of the research. All research will be completed in your child's usual classroom location, timetable and will reflect a standard lesson scenario.

Classroom observations

Observations will be as unobtrusive as possible and will be used to gain insight into how teachers and students interact when participating in the drama process. While your child participates in the playbuilding, problem-solving and discussions during Boal's drama activities for digital citizenship, classroom observations may be recorded either with video or photographs during the research. This will be to note any significant moments during the playbuilding or performing process where your child creates dramatic meaning or demonstrates a deeper understanding of digital citizenship.

Focus group

The focus group will allow the researcher to create an open conversational space to explore your child's:

1. definition of 'digital citizenship'
2. perspective of what it is to be a 'digital citizen' as a result of the drama activities they completed in class
3. changing social perceptions of themselves and their interactions with others through the drama activities.

The focus group will be video recorded for record-keeping and data analysis purposes only.

If your child declines the invitation to participate in this study, they will be given alternative classwork aligned to the NSW syllabus outcomes addressed during this research on a different topic determined by their classroom teacher.

(4) How much time will the study take?

All classwork for this research will be conducted inside of your child's timetabled Drama class time. The researcher will conduct 15 hours of observation over 5 weeks. Your child may also be invited to participate in a 1-hour focus group in the final week of the study during class time.

(5) Who can take part in the study?

Any student enrolled in Years 7, 8, 9 or 10 Drama at one of the five schools selected is invited to participate in this study. It is estimated your child will be one of approx. 250 students who will complete the unit of work over the course of the research.

(6) Does my child have to be in the study? Can they withdraw from the study once they've started?

Being in this study is completely voluntary, and your child does not have to take part. Your decision whether to let them participate will not affect your/their relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of Sydney or the NSW Department of Education, now or in the future.

If you decide to let your child take part in the study and then change your mind later (or they no longer wish to take part), they are free to withdraw from the study at any time. To withdraw from the study, please inform your child's classroom teacher, and we will remove them from the research environment and allocate them suitable separate classwork in another class.

All data collected in this research will not reveal personal information about your child. All recordings collected through this study will be done for research purposes only and will not be published.

If your child takes part in a focus group, they are free to stop participating at any stage or to refuse to answer any of the questions. However, it will not be possible to withdraw their individual comments from our records once the group has started, as it is a group discussion.

If your child withdraws from the study, we will not collect any more information from them. Please let us know at the time what you would like us to do with the information we have collected about them up to that point. If you wish, their information will be removed from our study records and will not be included in publications, up to the point that we have analysed and published the results.

(7) Are there any risks or costs associated with being in the study?

The possibility of risk during this research is unlikely. All activities undertaken in this research is the standard classroom practice and outcomes for drama education. Physical harm through workshop and playbuilding activity is unlikely; however, should injury occur, your child will immediately receive first aid under the school's risk management procedures and be escorted to sick bay. Parents/carers will then be notified of how the injury occurred and the steps that followed.

Psychological harm (feelings of distress or anger), devaluation of personal worth (being humiliated) or social harm (damage to networks or relationships) is also unlikely during this research. This research is focussed on developing positive pro-social behaviour between interactions online and offline; however, if any of the above occurs, immediately the classroom teacher will intervene, follow standard school discipline procedure (if necessary), or speak to your child individually about any personal issues to assist with developing a process to cater for these needs moving forward. Your child will always be allowed to withdraw from the research, should the need arise.

There will be no financial costs for you or your child during this research.

Aside from giving up their time, we do not expect that there will be any risks or costs associated with taking part in this study for your child.

(8) Are there any benefits associated with being in the study?

We cannot guarantee that your child will receive any direct benefits from being in the study.

(9) What will happen to information that is collected during the study?

During this study all:

- recordings - video, audio and photographs will be used for analysis purposes only (not for publication). Once the research is completed, they will be stored for record-keeping purposes in a secure location at the University of Sydney. This data will be stored securely for 20 years or until your child reaches the age of 25 years old.

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- personal information will be kept confidential throughout the study. Pseudonyms will be used to describe your child's work, if needed.
- results from this research will be published during 2024-2025, however, your child and the school will remain anonymous. The results will be published in verbal presentations at NSW teacher conferences, academic conferences, wellbeing conferences and published in academic journals and teacher professional learning documents.
- electronic data will be stored through the University of Sydney's secure cloud-based research programs. The University of Sydney will retain ownership of these documents and retain privacy control of their network.
- of the data collected will not be used for any other purpose than what has been outlined in this information statement.

By providing your consent, you are agreeing to us collecting personal information about your child for the purposes of this research study. Their personal information will only be used for the purposes outlined in this Participant Information Statement, unless you consent otherwise.

Your child's information will be stored securely, and their identity/information will be kept strictly confidential, except as required by law. Study findings may be published, but your child will not be individually identifiable in these publications.

(10) Can I or my child tell other people about the study?

Yes, you are welcome to tell other people about the study.

(11) What if we would like further information about the study?

When you have read this information, Cathryn Ricketts-Horvat will be available to discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you or your child would like to know more at any stage during the study, please feel free to contact Cathryn Ricketts-Horvat, Researcher via email at cric5296@uni.sydney.edu.au.

(12) Will we be told the results of the study?

You and your child have a right to receive feedback about the overall results of this study. You can tell us that you wish to receive feedback by ticking the relevant box on the consent form and provide us with an appropriate contact method to send you the results. This feedback will be in the form of a handout providing you with a brief summary of the key findings from the research. You will receive this feedback after the study is finished.

(13) What if we have a complaint or any concerns about the study?

Research involving humans in Australia is reviewed by an independent group of people called a Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the HREC of the University of Sydney [*INSERT protocol number once approval is obtained*]. As part of this process, we have agreed to carry out the study according to the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)*. This statement has been developed to protect people who agree to take part in research studies.

If you (or your child) are concerned about the way this study is being conducted or wish to make a complaint to someone independent from the study, please contact the university using the details outlined below. Please quote the study title and protocol number.

The Manager, Ethics Administration, University of Sydney:

- **Telephone:** +61 2 8627 8176
- **Email:** human.ethics@sydney.edu.au

Appendices

- Fax: +61 2 8627 8177 (Facsimile)

This information sheet is for you to keep

1c: Participant Information Statement Student



Sydney School of Education and Social Work
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

ABN 15 211 513 464

Professor Michael Anderson
Professor of Education (Arts and Creativity)

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The University of Sydney
NSW 2006 AUSTRALIA
Telephone: +61 2 9351 7810
Facsimile: +61 2 9351 4580
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Human-centred and online citizens: A study of digital citizenship through drama pedagogy.

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

(1) What is this study about?

You are invited to take part in a research study about their ability to understand and reflect on your roles as citizens in both the online and offline world. Using drama methods from Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed, you will explore different perspectives and scenarios to reflect upon your behaviour when using technology and when interacting with others. Participating in this research will not alter your ability to meet syllabus expectations for the Record of School Achievement (RoSA). All classwork addresses standard NSW syllabus outcomes.

You have been invited to participate in this study because your school was selected through an Expression of interest (EOI) process with the NSW Department of Education to complete this study. This Participant Information Statement tells you about the research study. Knowing what is involved will help you decide if you want to take part in the research. Please read this sheet carefully and ask questions about anything that you don't understand or want to know more about.

Participation in this research study is voluntary.

By giving your consent to take part in this study, you are telling us that you:

- ✓ Understand what you have read.
- ✓ Agree to take part in the research study as outlined below.
- ✓ Agree to the use of your personal information as described.

You will be given a copy of this Participant Information Statement to keep.

(2) Who is running the study?

The study is being carried out by the following researchers:

- Cathryn Ricketts-Horvat, 7-12 Creative Arts Advisor of the NSW Department of Education.

Cathryn Ricketts-Horvat is conducting this study as the basis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at The University of Sydney. This will take place under the supervision of Professor Michael Anderson, Professor of Education (Arts and Creativity).

(3) What will the study involve for me?

You will be asked to complete a unit of work in your normal class time that allows you to complete a series of drama games and activities exploring and unpacking the concept of digital citizenship. You will complete a series of improvisation games, playbuilding tasks, scenarios, and problem-solve situations addressing themes digital citizenship framed through Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed*. While you are completing your classwork, you will be observed by the researcher and may be invited to participate in a focus group at the conclusion of the research. Everything will be completed in your regular class time, room and will reflect a standard lesson scenario.

Classroom observations

Observations will be as unobtrusive as possible and will be used to gain insight into how your teacher interacts with you and your classmates when participating in the drama process. While you are participating in the drama work, a researcher will be observing and recording you either with video or photographs during the research. This will be to note any significant moments during the playbuilding or performing process where you create dramatic meaning or demonstrate a deeper understanding of what it is to be a digital citizen or how to behave in a world that is online and offline at the same time.

Focus group

The focus group will allow the researcher to create an open conversational space to explore your:

1. definition of 'digital citizenship'
2. perspective of what it is to be a 'digital citizen' as a result of the drama activities you complete
3. changing social perceptions of yourself and your interactions with others when doing drama.

The focus group will be video recorded for record-keeping and data analysis purposes only.

If you decide to decline the invitation to participate in this study, you will be given alternative classwork to complete during the research period on a topic determined by your classroom teacher.

(4) How much of my time will the study take?

All classwork for this research will be conducted inside of your normal timetabled Drama class time. The researcher will conduct 15 hours of observation over a 5 week period. You may also be invited to participate in a 1-hour focus group in the final week of the study.

(5) Who can take part in the study?

Any student enrolled in Years 7, 8, 9 or 10 Drama class at one of the five schools selected is invited to participate in this study. It is estimated you will be one of approx. 250 students who will complete the unit of work over the course of the research.

(6) Do I have to be in the study? Can I withdraw from the study once I've started?

Being in this study is completely voluntary and you do not have to take part. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of Sydney or the NSW Department of Education, now or in the future.

If you decide to take part in the study and then change your mind later, you are free to withdraw at any time. You can do this by speaking to your classroom teacher. There are no consequences for withdrawing from this study. You will simply have to complete another unit of work outside of the research classroom, in a supervised class with another teacher at school.

If you take part in a focus group, you are free to stop participating at any stage or to refuse to answer any of the questions. However, it will not be possible to withdraw your individual comments from our records once the group has started, as it is a group discussion.

If you decide to withdraw from the study, we will not collect any more information from you. Please let us know at the time when you withdraw what you would like us to do with the information we have collected about you up to that point. If you wish your information will be removed from our study records and will not be included in the study results, up to the point that we have analysed and published the results.

(7) Are there any risks or costs associated with being in the study?

The possibility of risk during this research is unlikely. All activities undertaken in this research is the standard classroom practice and outcomes for drama education. Physical harm through workshop and playbuilding activity is unlikely; however, should an injury occur, you will immediately receive first aid under the school's risk management procedures and be escorted to sickbay. Parents/carers will then be notified of how the injury occurred and the steps that followed.

Psychological harm (feelings of distress or anger), devaluation of personal worth (being humiliated) or social harm (damage or networks or relationships) is also unlikely during this research. This research is focussed on developing positive pro-social behaviour between interactions online and offline; however, if any of the above occurs, immediately your classroom teacher will intervene, follow standard school discipline procedure (if necessary), or you individually about any personal issues to assist with developing a process to cater for these needs moving forward. You will always be allowed to withdraw from the research, should the need arise.

There will be no financial costs for you or your parents during this research.

Aside from giving up your time, we do not expect that there will be any risks or costs associated with taking part in this study.

(8) Are there any benefits associated with being in the study?

We cannot guarantee that you will receive any direct benefits from being in the study.

(9) What will happen to information about me that is collected during the study?

During this study all:

- recordings - video, audio and photographs will be used for analysis purposes only (not for publication). Once the research is completed, they will be stored for record-keeping purposes in a secure location at the University of Sydney. This data will be stored securely for 20 years or until you reach the age of 25 years old.
- personal information will be kept confidential throughout the study. Pseudonyms (aliases) will be used to describe your work and your school, if needed.
- results from this research will be published during 2024-2025, however, you will remain anonymous. The results will be published in verbal presentations at NSW teacher conferences, academic conferences, wellbeing conferences and published in academic journals and teacher professional learning documents.
- electronic data will be stored through the University of Sydney's secure cloud-based research programs. The University of Sydney will retain ownership of these documents and retain privacy control of their network.
- of the data collected will not be used for any other purpose than what has been outlined in this information statement.

Appendices

By providing your consent, you are agreeing to us collecting personal information about you for the purposes of this research study. Your information will only be used for the purposes outlined in this Participant Information Statement, unless you consent otherwise.

Your information will be stored securely, and your identity/information will be kept strictly confidential, except as required by law. Study findings may be published, but you will not be individually identifiable in these publications.

(10) Can I tell other people about the study?

Yes, you are welcome to tell other people about the study.

(11) What if I would like further information about the study?

When you have read this information, Cathryn Ricketts-Horvat will be available to discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage during the study, please feel free to contact Cathryn Ricketts-Horvat, Researcher via email at cric5296@uni.sydney.edu.au.

(12) Will I be told the results of the study?

You have a right to receive feedback about the overall results of this study. You can tell us that you wish to receive feedback by ticking the relevant box on the consent form. This feedback will be in the form one-page summary of the key findings of the research. You will receive this feedback after the study is finished.

(13) What if I have a complaint or any concerns about the study?

Research involving humans in Australia is reviewed by an independent group of people called a Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the HREC of the University of Sydney [*INSERT protocol number once approval is obtained*]. As part of this process, we have agreed to carry out the study according to the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)*. This statement has been developed to protect people who agree to take part in research studies.

If you are concerned about the way this study is being conducted or you wish to make a complaint to someone independent from the study, please contact the university using the details outlined below. Please quote the study title and protocol number.

The Manager, Ethics Administration, University of Sydney:

- **Telephone:** +61 2 8627 8176
- **Email:** human.ethics@sydney.edu.au
- **Fax:** +61 2 8627 8177 (Facsimile)

This information sheet is for you to keep

1d: Participant Information Statement Teacher



Sydney School of Education and Social Work
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

ABN 15 211 513 464

Professor Michael Anderson
Professor of Education (Arts and Creativity)

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A35 – Education Building
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Human-centred and online citizens: A study of digital citizenship through drama pedagogy.

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

(1) What is this study about?

You are invited to participate in a research study about a student’s ability to understand and reflect on their roles as citizens in both the online and offline world. Using drama methods from Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed, students will explore different perspectives and scenarios to reflect upon their behaviour when using technology and when interacting with others in a technologically advancing world. All classroom work for this research has been aligned with the outcomes from the NSW Drama Syllabus listed below.

Objectives	Stage 4 outcomes	Stage 5 outcomes
Making	A student: 4.1.2 improvises and play builds through group devised processes 4.1.3 devises and enacts drama using scripted and unscripted material 4.1.4 explores a range of ways to structure dramatic work in collaboration with others.	A student: 5.1.2 contributes selects, develops and structures ideas in improvisation and play building 5.1.3 devises, interprets and enacts drama using scripted and unscripted material 5.1.4 explores, structures and refines ideas using dramatic forms, performance styles and dramatic techniques (Boal) and technologies.
Performing	A student: 4.2.3 explores and uses aspects of dramatic forms, performance styles, theatrical conventions and technologies to create dramatic meaning.	A student: 5.2.3 employs a variety of dramatic forms, performance styles, dramatic techniques, theatrical conventions and technologies to create dramatic meaning.
Appreciating	A student: 4.3.2 recognises the function of drama and theatre in reflecting social and cultural aspects of human experience.	A student: 5.3.2 analyses the contemporary and historical contexts of drama

You have been invited to participate in this study because your school was selected through an Expression of interest (EOI) process with the NSW Department of Education to complete this study. This Participant Information Statement tells you about the research study. Knowing what is involved will help you decide if you want to take part in the research. Please read this sheet carefully and ask questions about anything that you don’t understand or want to know more about.

Participation in this research study is voluntary.

By giving your consent to take part in this study, you are telling us that you:

- ✓ Understand what you have read.
- ✓ Agree to take part in the research study as outlined below.
- ✓ Agree to the use of your personal information as described.

Appendices

You will be given a copy of this Participant Information Statement to keep.

(2) Who is running the study?

The study is being carried out by the following researchers:

- Cathryn Ricketts-Horvat, 7-12 Creative Arts Advisor of the NSW Department of Education.

Cathryn Ricketts-Horvat is conducting this study as the basis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at The University of Sydney. This will take place under the supervision of Professor Michael Anderson, Professor of Education (Arts and Creativity).

(3) What will the study involve for me?

You will be asked to deliver/teach a unit of work aligned to the NSW drama syllabus that enables students to undertake a series of drama games and activities exploring and unpacking Digital Citizenship themes and issues. While you are teaching the unit and students participating in their lessons, you will be observed by the researcher and participate in an interview. All research will be completed in your regular classroom location and will reflect a standard lesson scenario. The unit of work is titled u.b.do, and the program, lesson plans and assessment tasks are available to download from the [NSW Department of Education curriculum website](#).

Classroom observations

Observations will be as unobtrusive as possible and will be used to gain insight into how you and your students interact when participating in the drama process. Classroom observations may be recorded either with video or photographs during the research. This will be to note any significant moments during the playbuilding or performing process where you and your students contribute to the dramatic meaning of a performance or demonstrate a deeper understanding of the topic.

Interview

The interview will allow the researcher to hear your recounts of classroom experiences, knowledge of the topic, and areas of concern directly related to the teaching and learning program. The interview will be video recorded for record-keeping and data analysis purposes only.

If you decline the invitation to participate in this study, the researcher will approach a different teacher from the EOI list as a replacement.

(4) How much of my time will the study take?

All classwork for this research will be conducted inside of your normal timetabled Drama class time. The teaching and learning program on digital citizenship is a 5-week program that you will not need to plan or prepare for, as it comes with all classroom resources pre-written for you. The researcher will also conduct 15 hours of observation of you and your class across 5 weeks. You will also be invited to participate in a 1-hour interview at the completion of the unit. If the interview is required to be conducted outside of your standard planning time, you will be eligible for teacher-identified professional learning hours to compensate for the duration of the interview. The researcher will be able to connect you with curriculum advisors who can assist in ensuring this time goes towards your required accreditation hours.

(5) Who can take part in the study?

Five schools and five teachers will be selected from the EOI process to participate in this study. Any student enrolled in Stage 4 or 5 Drama class at one of the five schools selected is invited to participate.

We estimated there will be a total of approx. 250 students who will complete the unit of work over the course of the research.

(6) Do I have to be in the study? Can I withdraw from the study once I've started?

Being in this study is completely voluntary and you do not have to take part. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of Sydney or the NSW Department of Education, now or in the future.

If you decide to take part in the study and then change your mind later, you are free to withdraw at any time. You can do this by notifying Cathryn Ricketts-Horvat. There will be no consequences for withdrawing from the study.

You are free to stop the interview at any time. Unless you say that you want us to keep them, any recordings will be erased and the information you have provided will not be included in the study results. You may also refuse to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer during the interview.

If you decide to withdraw from the study, we will not collect any more information from you. Please let us know at the time when you withdraw what you would like us to do with the information we have collected about you up to that point. If you wish your information will be removed from our study records and will not be included in the study results, up to the point that we have analysed and published the results.

(7) Are there any risks or costs associated with being in the study?

The possibility of risk during this research is unlikely. All activities undertaken in this research is the standard classroom practice for drama education. Physical harm through workshop and playbuilding activity is unlikely; however, should an injury occur, you will immediately receive first aid under the school's risk management procedures, contact your line manager and be escorted to the office.

Psychological harm (feelings of distress or anger), devaluation of personal worth (being humiliated) or social harm (damage or networks or relationships) is also unlikely during this research. This research is focussed on developing positive pro-social behaviour between interactions online and offline, however, if any of the above occurs, we will immediately stop any activity/workshop/performance, follow standard school discipline procedure (if necessary), and speak to your executive staff member to work out an action plan moving forward. You will always be given the opportunity to withdraw from the research, should the need arise.

There will be no financial costs for you during this research.

Aside from giving up your time, we do not expect that there will be any risks or costs associated with taking part in this study.

(8) Are there any benefits associated with being in the study?

We cannot guarantee that you will receive any direct benefits from being in the study.

(9) What will happen to information about me that is collected during the study?

During this study all:

- recordings - video, audio and photographs will be used for analysis purposes only (not for publication). Once the research is completed, they will be stored for record-keeping purposes in a secure location at the University of Sydney. This data will be stored securely for 20 years.

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- personal information will be kept confidential throughout the study. Pseudonyms (aliases) will be used to describe your work and your school if needed.
- results from this research will be published during 2024-2025; however, you will remain anonymous. The results will be published in verbal presentations at NSW teacher conferences, academic conferences, wellbeing conferences and published in academic journals and teacher professional learning documents.
- electronic data will be stored through the University of Sydney's secure cloud-based research programs and databases. The University of Sydney will retain ownership of these documents and retain privacy control of their network.
- of the data collected will not be used for any other purpose than what has been outlined in this information statement.

By providing your consent, you are agreeing to us collecting personal information about you for the purposes of this research study. Your information will only be used for the purposes outlined in this Participant Information Statement, unless you consent otherwise.

Your information will be stored securely and your identity/information will be kept strictly confidential, except as required by law. Study findings may be published, but you will not be individually identifiable in these publications.

(10) Can I tell other people about the study?

Yes, you are welcome to tell other people about the study.

(11) What if I would like further information about the study?

When you have read this information, Cathryn Ricketts-Horvat will be available to discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage during the study, please feel free to contact Cathryn Ricketts-Horvat, Researcher via email at cric5296@uni.sydney.edu.au.

(12) Will I be told the results of the study?

You have a right to receive feedback about the overall results of this study. You can tell us that you wish to receive feedback by ticking the relevant box on the consent form. This feedback will be in the form of a summative paper and overview. Information will also be shared within the Creative Arts state-wide staffroom curriculum newsletter. You will receive this feedback after the study is finished.

(13) What if I have a complaint or any concerns about the study?

Research involving humans in Australia is reviewed by an independent group of people called a Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the HREC of the University of Sydney [*INSERT protocol number once approval is obtained*]. As part of this process, we have agreed to carry out the study according to the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)*. This statement has been developed to protect people who agree to take part in research studies.

If you are concerned about the way this study is being conducted or you wish to make a complaint to someone independent from the study, please contact the university using the details outlined below. Please quote the study title and protocol number.

The Manager, Ethics Administration, University of Sydney:

- **Telephone:** +61 2 8627 8176
- **Email:** human.ethics@sydney.edu.au

Appendices

- Fax: +61 2 8627 8177 (Facsimile)

This information sheet is for you to keep

1e: Parent/Carer Consent form



ABN 15 211 513 464

**Sydney School of Education and Social Work
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences**

Professor Michael Anderson
Professor of Education (Arts and Creativity)

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Telephone: +61 2 9351 7810
Facsimile: +61 2 9351 4580
Email: michael.anderson@sydney.edu.au
Web: <http://www.sydney.edu.au/>

Human-centred and online citizens: A study of digital citizenship through drama pedagogy.

PARENT/CARER CONSENT FORM

I, [PRINT PARENT'S/CARER'S NAME], consent to my child
..... [PRINT CHILD'S NAME] participating in this research study.

In giving my consent I state that:

- I understand the purpose of the study, what my child will be asked to do, and any risks/benefits involved.
- I have read the Information Statement and have been able to discuss my child's involvement in the study with the researchers if I wished to do so.
- The researchers have answered any questions that I had about the study and I am happy with the answers.
- I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary and my child does not have to take part. My decision whether to let them take part in the study will not affect our relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of Sydney or the NSW Department of Education now or in the future.
- I understand that my child can withdraw from the study at any time.
- I understand that my child may leave the focus group at any time if they do not wish to continue. I also understand that it will not be possible to withdraw their comments once the group has started as it is a group discussion.
- I understand that personal information about my child that is collected over the course of this project will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to. I understand that information about my child will only be told to others with my permission, except as required by law.
- I understand that the results of this study may be published, and that publications will not contain my child's name or any identifiable information about my child.

Appendices

I consent to:

- **Audio-recording of my child** YES NO
- **Video-recording of my child** YES NO
- **Photographs of my child** YES NO

Would you like to receive feedback about the overall results of this study?

YES NO

If you answered **YES**, please indicate your preferred form of feedback and address:

Postal: _____

Email: _____

Parent's/carer's signature:

.....
Signature

.....
PRINT name

.....
Date

1f: Student Consent Form



ABN 15 211 513 464

**Sydney School of Education and Social Work
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences**

Professor Michael Anderson
Professor of Education (Arts and Creativity)

Room 807
A35 – Education Building
The University of Sydney
NSW 2006 AUSTRALIA
Telephone: +61 2 9351 7810
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Human-centred and online citizens: A study of digital citizenship through drama pedagogy.

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I, [PRINT NAME], agree to take part in this research study.

In giving my consent I state that:

- I understand the purpose of the study, what I will be asked to do, and any risks/benefits involved.
- I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been able to discuss my involvement in the study with the researchers if I wished to do so.
- The researchers have answered any questions that I had about the study and I am happy with the answers.
- I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary and I do not have to take part. My decision whether to be in the study will not affect my relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of Sydney or the NSW Department of Education now or in the future.
- I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time.
- understand that I may leave the focus group at any time if I do not wish to continue. I also understand that it will not be possible to withdraw my comments once the group has started as it is a group discussion.
- I understand that personal information about me that is collected over the course of this project will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to. I understand that information about me will only be told to others with my permission, except as required by law.
- I understand that the results of this study may be published, and that publications will not contain my name or any identifiable information about me.

Appendices

I consent to:

- **Audio-recording** YES NO
- **Video-recording** YES NO
- **Photographs** YES NO

I would like to review my interview transcripts YES NO

I would like to receive feedback about the overall results of this study YES NO

If you answered **YES**, please indicate your preferred form of feedback and address:

Postal: _____

Email: _____

.....
Signature

.....
PRINT name

.....
Date

1g: Teacher Consent Forms



Sydney School of Education and Social Work
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

ABN 15 211 513 464

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Human-centred and online citizens: A study of digital citizenship through drama pedagogy.

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I, [PRINT NAME], agree to take part in this research study.

In giving my consent I state that:

- I understand the purpose of the study, what I will be asked to do, and any risks/benefits involved.
- I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been able to discuss my involvement in the study with the researchers if I wished to do so.
- The researchers have answered any questions that I had about the study and I am happy with the answers.
- I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary and I do not have to take part. My decision whether to be in the study will not affect my relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of Sydney or the NSW Department of Education now or in the future.
- I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time.
- I understand that I may stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, and that unless I indicate otherwise any recordings will then be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study. I also understand that I may refuse to answer any questions I don't wish to answer.
- *I understand that personal information about me that is collected over the course of this project will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to. I understand that information about me will only be told to others with my permission, except as required by law.*
- *I understand that the results of this study may be published, and that publications will not contain my name or any identifiable information about me.*

Appendices

I consent to:

- **Audio-recording** YES NO
- **Video-recording** YES NO
- **Photographs** YES NO

I would like to review my interview transcripts YES NO

I would like to receive feedback about the overall results of this study YES NO

If you answered **YES**, please indicate your preferred form of feedback and address:

Postal: _____

Email: _____

.....
Signature

.....
PRINT name

.....
Date

1h: Principal Letter



Sydney School of Education and Social Work
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

ABN 15 211 513 464

Professor Michael Anderson
Professor of Education (Arts and Creativity)

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Web: <http://www.sydney.edu.au/>

Human-centred and online citizens: A study of digital citizenship through drama pedagogy.

Dear Principal

On the (insert date) (insert teacher name) applied through an EOI in the Statewide staffroom to take part in a research project to be studied in five schools across NSW. Your school has been selected. This letter has been written to provide you with further insight and information about the research study. Knowing what is involved will help you decide if you want your school to take part in the research. Please read this sheet carefully and ask questions about anything that you don't understand or want to know more about.

(1) What is this study about?

Your teacher (insert name) and Year 9 and 10 drama students are invited to participate in a research study about a student's ability to understand and reflect on their roles as citizens in both the online and offline world. Using drama methods from Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed, students will explore different perspectives and scenarios to reflect upon their behaviour when using technology and when interacting with others in a technologically advancing world. All classroom work for this research has been aligned with the outcomes from the NSW Drama Syllabus listed below.

Objectives	Stage 4 outcomes	Stage 5 outcomes
Making	A student: 4.1.2 improvises and play builds through group devised processes 4.1.3 devises and enacts drama using scripted and unscripted material 4.1.4 explores a range of ways to structure dramatic work in collaboration with others.	A student: 5.1.2 contributes selects, develops and structures ideas in improvisation and play building 5.1.3 devises, interprets and enacts drama using scripted and unscripted material 5.1.4 explores, structures and refines ideas using dramatic forms, performance styles and dramatic techniques (Boal) and technologies.
Performing	A student: 4.2.3 explores and uses aspects of dramatic forms, performance styles, theatrical conventions and technologies to create dramatic meaning.	A student: 5.2.3 employs a variety of dramatic forms, performance styles, dramatic techniques, theatrical conventions and technologies to create dramatic meaning.
Appreciating	A student: 4.3.2 recognises the function of drama and theatre in reflecting social and cultural aspects of human experience.	A student: 5.3.2 analyses the contemporary and historical contexts of drama

Participation in this research study is voluntary.

(2) Who is running the study?

The study is being carried out by the following researchers:

- Cathryn Horvat, 7-12 Creative Arts Advisor of the NSW Department of Education.

Appendices

Cathryn Ricketts-Horvat is conducting this study as the basis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at The University of Sydney. This will take place under the supervision of Professor Michael Anderson, Professor of Education (Arts and Creativity).

(3) What will the study involve for my school?

Your teacher will be asked to deliver/teach a unit of work aligned to the NSW drama syllabus that enables students to undertake a series of drama games and activities exploring and unpacking Digital Citizenship themes and issues. While your teacher is teaching the unit and students participating in their lessons, you will be observed by the researcher and participate in an interview. All research will be completed in your regular classroom location and will reflect a standard lesson scenario. The unit of work is titled u.b.do, and the program, lesson plans and assessment tasks are available to download from the [NSW Department of Education curriculum website](#).

Classroom observations

Observations will be as unobtrusive as possible and will be used to gain insight into how your teacher and students interact when participating in the drama process. Classroom observations may be recorded either with video or photographs during the research. This will be to note any significant moments during the playbuilding or performing process where you and your students contribute to the dramatic meaning of a performance or demonstrate a deeper understanding of the topic. 15 hours of observation will take place at your school over weeks 1, 3 and 5 of the teaching and learning program.

Teacher interview

The interview will allow the researcher to hear your teachers recounts of classroom experiences, knowledge of the topic, and areas of concern directly related to the teaching and learning program. The interview will be video recorded for record-keeping and data analysis purposes only. The interview will go for one hour.

Student focus group

The focus group will allow the researcher to create an open conversational space to explore your student's:

1. definition of 'digital citizenship'
2. perspective of what it is to be a 'digital citizen' as a result of the drama activities they completed in class
3. changing social perceptions of themselves and their interactions with others through the drama activities.

The focus group will be video recorded for record-keeping and data analysis purposes only. The focus group will have 8-12 students and be completed within one hour.

The interview and focus group questions have been attached to this email for your information.

(4) How much of my time will the study take?

All classwork for this research will be conducted inside of your schools normal timetabled Drama class time. The teaching and learning program on digital citizenship is a 5-week program that your teacher will not need to plan or prepare for, as it comes with all classroom resources pre-written for them. The researcher will also conduct 15 hours of observation of you and your class across 5 weeks. The teacher will also be invited to participate in a 1-hour interview at the completion of the unit. If the interview is required to be conducted outside of their standard planning time, they will be eligible for teacher-identified professional learning hours to compensate for the duration of the interview. The researcher will be able to connect you with curriculum advisors who can assist in ensuring this time goes towards their required accreditation hours.

(5) Who can take part in the study?

Appendices

Five schools and five teachers will be selected from the EOI process to participate in this study. Any student enrolled in Stage 4 or 5 Drama class at one of the five schools selected is invited to participate. We estimated there will be a total of approx. 250 students who will complete the unit of work over the course of the research.

(6) Are there any risks or costs associated with being in the study?

The possibility of risk during this research is unlikely. All activities undertaken in this research is the standard classroom practice for drama education. Physical harm through workshop and playbuilding activity is unlikely; however, should an injury occur, you will immediately receive first aid under the school's risk management procedures, contact your line manager and be escorted to the office.

Psychological harm (feelings of distress or anger), devaluation of personal worth (being humiliated) or social harm (damage or networks or relationships) is also unlikely during this research. This research is focussed on developing positive pro-social behaviour between interactions online and offline, however, if any of the above occurs, we will immediately stop any activity/workshop/performance, follow standard school discipline procedure (if necessary), and speak to your executive staff member to work out an action plan moving forward. You will always be given the opportunity to withdraw from the research, should the need arise.

There will be no financial costs for you during this research.

(7) What will happen to information about my school, teacher or students that is collected during the study?

During this study all:

- recordings - video, audio and photographs will be used for analysis purposes only (not for publication). Once the research is completed, they will be stored for record-keeping purposes in a secure location at the University of Sydney. This data will be stored securely for 20 years.
- personal information will be kept confidential throughout the study. Pseudonyms (aliases) will be used to describe your teachers work and your school if needed.
- results from this research will be published during 2024-2025; however, all participants will remain anonymous. The results will be published in verbal presentations at NSW teacher conferences, academic conferences, wellbeing conferences and published in academic journals and teacher professional learning documents.
- electronic data will be stored through the University of Sydney's secure cloud-based research programs and databases. The University of Sydney will retain ownership of these documents and retain privacy control of their network.
- of the data collected will not be used for any other purpose than what has been outlined in this information statement.

(8) What if I would like further information about the study?

When you have read this information, Cathryn Horvat will be available to discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage during the study, please feel free to contact Cathryn Horvat, Researcher via email at cric5296@uni.sydney.edu.au. All consent forms will be attached to this email for your approval.

1i: NSW Department of Education SERAP Approval letter

| NSW Department of Education

Mrs Cathryn Horvat (Ricketts)
13 Sedona Glade
THE PONDS NSW 2769

DOC21/515992
SERAP 2021034

Dear Mrs Horvat (Ricketts)

I refer to your application to conduct a research project in NSW government schools entitled *Human-centred and online citizens: a study of digital citizenship through drama pedagogy*. I am pleased to inform you that your application has been approved.

You may contact principals of the nominated schools to seek their participation. **You should include a copy of this letter with the documents you send to principals.**

This approval will remain valid until 11 May 2022.

The following researchers or research assistants have fulfilled the Working with Children screening requirements to interact with or observe children for the purposes of this research for the period indicated:

Researcher name	WWCC	WWCC expires
Cathryn Horvat	WWC0223899E	31-May-2026

I draw your attention to the following requirements for all researchers in NSW government schools:

- The privacy of participants is to be protected as per the NSW Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998.
- School principals have the right to withdraw the school from the study at any time. The approval of the principal for the specific method of gathering information must also be sought.
- The privacy of the school and the students is to be protected.
- The participation of teachers and students must be voluntary and must be at the school's convenience.
- Any proposal to publish the outcomes of the study should be discussed with the research approvals officer before publication proceeds.
- All conditions attached to the approval must be complied with.

When your study is completed please email your report to: det.serap@det.nsw.edu.au. You may also be asked to present on the findings of your research.

I wish you every success with your research.

Yours sincerely



Dr Robert Stevens
Manager, Research
Strategic Analysis and Research
Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation
11 May 2021

education.nsw.gov.au
Strategic Analysis And Research
Centre For Education Statistics And Evaluation
NSW Department Of Education
Level 9, 105 Phillip Street, Parramatta NSW 2150 | GPO Box 33, Sydney NSW 2001
Telephone: 7814 2547 – Email: det.serap@det.nsw.edu.au



1j: EOI Teacher Interest Survey

25/09/2024, 10:53

Short survey - EOI: Human-centred and online citizens: A study of digital citizenship through drama pedagogy.

Short survey - EOI: Human-centred and online citizens: A study of digital citizenship through drama pedagogy.

Teachers are invited to submit an expression of interest to take part in a research study about a student's ability to understand and reflect on their roles as citizens in both the online and offline world. Using drama methods from Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed, students will explore different perspectives and scenarios to reflect upon their behaviour when using technology and when interacting with others in a technologically advancing world. All classroom work for this research has been aligned with the NSW Drama Syllabus. All teaching materials will be supplied for the duration of the research. Students who opt-out of the research will be provided with alternative curriculum-aligned work that can be completed under the supervision of a different teacher and class.

What will the study involve for you?

You will be asked to deliver/teach a unit of work aligned to the NSW drama syllabus that enables students to undertake a series of drama games and activities exploring and unpacking Digital Citizenship themes and issues. While you are teaching the unit and students participating in their lessons, you will be observed by the researcher and participate in an interview. All research will be completed in your normal classroom location and will reflect a standard lesson scenario.

Time commitment

The teaching and learning program (titled [u.b.do](#)) that accompanies this study goes for 5 weeks and has been written and released on the NSW DoE's curriculum website. When teaching this unit, your nominated teacher and drama students will be observed for a total of 15 hours. Teachers will be invited to participate in an additional 1-hour interview at the end of the study. 8-12 students will also be invited to participate in a 1-hour focus group at the end of the study. Further information about this will be provided upon selection.

Participation in this research study is voluntary.

A panel with representatives from both the DoE and The University of Sydney will select five schools to participate in this five-week study. Should you be selected, the University will send you further consent and information forms to complete.

EOI DUE by _____.

Cathryn Ricketts-Horvat is conducting this study as the basis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at The University of Sydney. This will take place under the supervision of Professor Michael Anderson, Professor of Education (Arts and Creativity).

* Indicates required question

Appendices

25/09/2024, 10:53

Short survey - EOI: Human-centred and online citizens: A study of digital citizenship through drama pedagogy.

1. Email *

2. Full name: *

3. School: *

4. Email: *

5. Have you been allocated a Stage 4 or 5 Drama class in your teaching periods for 2021?

Mark only one oval.

- Stage 4
- Stage 5
- Both Stage 4 and 5
- No

6. My Principal supports this EOI application. *

Principals will be contacted to endorse this application prior to selection.

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

Appendices

25/09/2024, 10:53

Short survey - EOJ: Human-centred and online citizens: A study of digital citizenship through drama pedagogy.

7. Principal's name

8. Principal's email *

9. The researcher will provide alternative curriculum-aligned work for any students * who opt out of the study. I accept that it's the responsibility of the school to find appropriate supervision for those students.

Mark only one oval.

Yes, I agree to this condition.

No, I do not agree to this.

Other: _____

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Google Forms

Appendix 2 - Interview Data

2a: Interview Timetable

Table 10.1

Interview Timetable

Teacher Name	Gender	School	Date	Mode	Years of teaching
Mrs Elsa	Female	Madike High School	December 13, 2021	Online	30
Mr Simon	Male	Montawl High School	December 16, 2021	At School	15
Mrs Thomas	Female	Tedrain High School	March 24, 2022	Online	>5
Ms Skye	Female	Lupaw High School	March 23, 2022	Online	35

2b: Teacher Interview Questions

Duration 60 minutes

The teacher interviews will be used to gain insight and a teacher's perspective of their student's growth and understanding:

1) Introduction

- a) Tell me about your experience as a drama teacher.

2) Student knowledge before commencing the drama unit

- a) How did your students react when you first told them they were going to be studying digital citizenship through drama? What did they think they would be doing?

3) Student knowledge after completing the drama unit

- a) Did you experience, and can you recall a particular time, when you noticed a 'light-bulb' moment with one of your students when they started making connections to their roles as digital citizens in the blended (online and human-centred) world?
- b) Did you notice a change in conversations or opinions about students' roles as digital citizens after the drama unit?

4) Development of drama knowledge and information related to context

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- a) Which elements of drama from the NSW Stage 4 and 5 drama syllabus are most suited for the exploration of this drama unit?
- b) As students progressed through the unit, do you believe they made connections between the activities and the real-world significance of their roles as digital citizens?
- c) How did the role and use of language and gesture influence a student's understanding of the context during the drama process?
- d) Do you think your students questioned their motivations, intentions or consequences of actions more, less or the same as the unit progressed? How?

5) Learning through drama pedagogy

- a) Select two of the four words I am about to say to describe a moment in your classroom that played an influential role during the drama unit. Justice, fairness, compassion, empathy.
- b) Describe a particular moment when either an individual or group of students used the drama process to undertake problem-solving of a particular issue. Describe how the journey influenced their development/understanding of the problem/issue.
- c) Were there any moments when a student's identification with a character influenced their perspective?
- d) During the playbuilding process and performances, can you recall a specific moment when symbolism was evident in the drama work?
- e) How did a student's understanding of digital citizenship issues develop from the planning/playbuilding stage to the performing and reflecting stage?
- f) How (if so) did the role of the audience influence a student journey through the drama process?
- g) How did the drama process encourage students to discover new insights into themselves through-risk taking and experimentation of the topic?
- h) How did students react to things they may have experienced positive, or negatively through the drama process?

Appendices

- i) Describe a particular emotion you had watching one of the student's performances and the reasons as to why you felt the way you did.

6) Approaches and opinions of the role of teachers, digital citizenship and the drama curriculum.

- a) Tell me about your experience and role as a teacher during the teaching of the drama unit.
- b) Do you see the role of teachers' as influential when moving forward with students as blended (online and human-centred) citizens? Why/why not?
- c) What was your understanding of the term digital citizenship prior to the unit? Has this changed?
- d) Where are the opportunities for digital citizenship to be addressed in NSW Stage 4 and 5 drama syllabus?
- e) In your opinion, how should future drama syllabuses be designed to best address students who live and socialise in a blended (online and human-centred) world?
- f) How do you see the role of technology in education?

Appendix 3 - Focus Group Data

3a: Focus Group Timetable

Table 10.2

Focus Group Timetable

School	Location	Date	Duration (Minutes)	Pages of transcript	Word Count of transcript	Number of Students
Madike High School	Auditorium	December 13, 2021	44	13	7355	10
Montawl High School	Drama Classroom	December 16, 2021	56	16	10613	8
Lupaw High School	Drama Classroom	March 23, 2022	48	11	6644	13
Tedrain High School	Drama Classroom	March 24, 2022	52	9	5510	8

3b: Focus Group Questions

Duration 1 hour

The focus group will allow the researcher to create an open conversational space to explore the student's:

1. definition of 'digital citizenship'
2. perspective of what it is to be a 'digital citizen' as a result of the drama process
3. changing social perceptions of themselves and their interactions with others through the drama process online (Geraghty, 2012)

Questions will be designed to allow participants to consider, discuss and evaluate their knowledge of digital citizenship and how the program has impacted them as human-centred and online citizens.

The data gained from this will be used to evaluate how effective the program has been in helping students become aware of and make the connection to 'what effects we [they] have in people's lives' as citizens in both worlds, and not on whether they

should follow a rules-based approach of digital citizenship (Freedman & Combs, 1996).

Table 10.3

Focus Group Questions

Type	Purpose	Question/s
Opening (30 seconds each)	A brief introduction (30 seconds) where students get acquainted. I outline the process and rules. The question is designed to help students feel connected, asking them to share their name and one thing that makes them smile.	Q: Tell us your name and one thing that you like to do that makes you smile.
Introductory	Initiates the discussion on the topic of interest, allowing students to share their understanding of the phenomenon being studied. The question focuses on the student's interest in drama and its relevance to their life experience.	Q: Tell me about your interest in drama and its relevance to your life experience.
Transition	Smoothly leads students into deeper discussions. The question asks students to provide examples of their everyday life interactions, both online and offline, and how these have evolved over the past three years.	Q: Give me an example or two of interactions in your everyday life where you are an active citizen online and offline. Has the balance of your two worlds, including the degree of interaction (i.e. online and offline) changed in the last 3 years?
Key Questions (10-15mins each)	(10-15 minutes each): These questions drive the core insights of the study, focusing on students' understanding of digital citizenship, their behaviour online vs. offline, and how the drama activities may have influenced their perspectives.	Q: When you hear the words digital citizenship, what comes to mind? Q: Tell me about a time when you have handled something online in a different way to how you would've if

	<p>you were dealing with the issue in person?</p> <p>Q: When participating in the drama activities, can you recall a time when your perspective shifted on a topic or scenario as a result of a interaction from another actor or audience response?</p> <p>Q: Did your understanding of your role as an online and offline citizen, change as a result of this drama process?</p> <p>Q: Explain how this drama process unpacked your understanding of your role as digital citizens when undertaking this program.</p>
<p>Ending question</p> <p>A reflective question to help close the discussion, asking students to express how they see themselves as citizens in a blended online and human-centred world. I summarise the key points.</p>	<p>Q: Write down on a piece of paper one sentence/draw an image/idea that best describes your perspective moving forward on how you see yourself now as a citizen in your blended world (online and human-centred), especially since completing the unit.</p>

3c: Focus Group Participant Hobbies and Pseudonyms by School

Table 10.4

Focus Group Participant Details

	Pseudonym	Hobbies	School
1	Everest	Dancing	Lupaw High School
2	Liberty	Acting	Lupaw High School
3	Ella	Dancing	Lupaw High School
4	Cassie	Reading	Lupaw High School
5	Ryder	Replaying sport	Lupaw High School
6	Max	Music	Lupaw High School
7	Alex	Basketball	Lupaw High School
8	Beryl	Woodblock	Lupaw High School
9	Katie	Soccer	Lupaw High School
10	Harold	Basketball	Lupaw High School
11	Jake	Basketball and soccer	Lupaw High School
12	Cora	Hanging out with friends	Lupaw High School
13	Arizona	Listening to music	Lupaw High School
1	Aria	Playing music	Madike High School
2	Belle	Hanging out with friends	Madike High School
3	Tiana	Drawing	Madike High School
4	Merida	Physical drama and warm-up activities	Madike High School
5	Rose	Going to the beach	Madike High School
6	Jasmine	Reading	Madike High School
7	Rapunzel	Eating watermelon	Madike High School
8	Mulan	Making music	Madike High School
9	Cindy	Scrapbooking	Madike High School
10	Moana	Painting	Madike High School
1	Emma	Reading	Montawl High School
2	Shirley	Going out with friends	Montawl High School
3	Dorothy	Drawing	Montawl High School
4	Caterina	Playing tennis	Montawl High School
5	Evie	Being with my dog	Montawl High School
6	Carolyn	Reading	Montawl High School
7	Bianca	Going to church	Montawl High School
8	Tsehay	Being with friends	Montawl High School
1	James	Walking my dog	Tedrain High School
2	Nia	Girlfriend	Tedrain High School
3	Toby	Going to girlfriend's house	Tedrain High School
4	Daisy	Playing netball	Tedrain High School
5	Rosie	Singing	Tedrain High School
6	Carly	Watching comic book movies	Tedrain High School

Appendices

7	Emily	Watching TV shows	Tedrain High School
8	Maddy	Playing netball	Tedrain High School
			Total focus group participants: 39

Appendix 4 - Observation Data

4a: Observation Timetable

Table 10.5

Observation Timetable

School	Observation Number	Location	Date	Hours	Format
Montawl High School	Lesson 1 & 2	Drama Classroom	October 29, 2021	2	Double Period (In-person)
Montawl High School	Lesson 3 & 4	Drama Classroom	November 5, 2021	2	Double Period (In-person)
Montawl High School	Lesson 5 & 6	Drama Classroom	November 12, 2021	2	Double Period (In-person)
Madike High School	Lesson 1	Online	October 13, 2021	1	Online (COVID Lockdown)
Madike High School	Lesson 2	Online	October 14, 2021	1	Online (COVID Lockdown)
Madike High School	Lesson 3	Online	October 16, 2021	1	Online (COVID Lockdown)
Madike High School	Lesson 4	Online	October 19, 2021	1	Online (COVID Lockdown)
Madike High School	Lesson 5	Online	October 20, 2021	1	Online (COVID Lockdown)
Madike High School	Lesson 6	Drama Classroom	November 2, 2021	1.5	In-person
Madike High School	Lesson 7	Drama Classroom	November 3, 2021	1.5	In-person
Tedrain High School	Lesson 1	Drama Classroom	February 7, 2022	1	In-person
Tedrain High School	Lesson 2	Drama Classroom	February 9, 2022	1	In-person
Tedrain High School	Lesson 3	Drama Classroom	February 21, 2022	1	In-person
Tedrain High School	Lesson 4	Drama Classroom	February 23, 2022	1	In-person
Tedrain High School	Lesson 5	Drama Classroom	March 7, 2022	1	In-person
Lupaw High School	Lesson 1	Drama Classroom	February 14, 2022	1	In-person
Lupaw High School	Lesson 2	Drama Classroom	February 16, 2022	1	In-person
Lupaw High School	Lesson 3	Drama Classroom	February 17, 2022	1	In-person
Lupaw High School	Lesson 4	Drama Classroom	February 28, 2022	1	In-person

Lupaw High School	Lesson 5	Drama Classroom	March 5, 2022	1	In-person
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4b: Observation Transcript Sample

Tedrain High School Observation – February 9, 2022

A Forum Theatre Workshop led by Mrs Thomas

Augusto Boal and Invisible Theatre

(The classroom is set up in a semicircle. Mrs Thomas stands at the front, engaging with the students. The students are sitting in chairs, some fidgeting, others listening attentively.)

Mrs Thomas: (Brightly)

Alright, morning. How are we all?

(The students murmur responses.)

Alright. Does anyone remember who Augusto Boal is?

Nia:

Invisible Theatre.

Mrs Thomas:

Yeah. So he did a lot of, like, Forum Theatre and Invisible Theatre. Does anyone remember what Spect-actor was? Yeah?

Rosie:

Like, um, a spectator that ends up joining the show?

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Mrs Thomas:

Yeah, fantastic. Um, yes, you end up joining the show. You're fantastic. Um, and issue-based theatre? What's that?

Nia:

Theatre based on an issue.

Mrs Thomas:

Oh wow, very good. She got it.

And what are some, uh, negative aspects associated with the online world?

Carly:

Racism.

Rosie:

Bullying. Catphishing.

Mrs Thomas:

Exactly! Fantastic. We're going to continue on that track, looking at Augusto Boal's Forum Theatre. Now, let's quickly warm up with a Boal game—he encourages playfulness and working together in collaboration.

Warm-Up Exercise

(Mrs Thomas moves to the centre of the room, the students forming a loose circle around her. She begins assigning numbers.)

Mrs Thomas:

Alright, we're going to remember some numbers. 1, 2, 3. Number 1s come over here,

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number 2s go over there, and 3s move to this side.

Great! Now, I'm going to walk you through four different movements.

(Mrs Thomas demonstrates the movements as she describes them.)

Mrs Thomas:

The first one is "circle." So, um, with hands sanitised—Evie, you may hover your hands if you want to. You're going to get into a circle and hold hands. Can you do that?

(The students form a circle, some hesitantly holding hands.)

Mrs Thomas:

Next is "scrum"—this is like rugby. You come into a circle, arms over each other's shoulders.

(The students shuffle into position, laughing and adjusting their posture.)

Mrs Thomas:

Alright, next is "stretch." You put your hands in the sky together.

Nia:

Wow.

Mrs Thomas:

It's called "stretch." Great. The last one is "star," in which you all turn outward and lean outwards like a star. Maybe try to hold hands or lean outward.

(The students struggle a bit with the star formation but manage to hold it for a moment.)

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Mrs Thomas:

Beautiful! Great job, everyone. Now relax.

(The students relax.)

Forum Theatre Introduction

(Mrs Thomas gathers the students again as she begins explaining the next part of the lesson.)

Mrs Thomas:

Last lesson, we looked at Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed, and two ways to develop meaning: Invisible Theatre and Image Theatre. Today, we're looking at his third form—Forum Theatre. Boal took the idea of political theatre as a tool for change and moved the focus of the play into the hands of the audience—*you*.

(The students listen closely.)

Mrs Thomas:

Each individual in the audience, called *spect-actors*, can voice their own oppressions and seek to overcome them through a variety of means developed by Boal. This is what we now call Forum Theatre.

(Mrs Thomas gestures toward the screen.)

Mrs Thomas:

I'll show you an example from the UK. It's a little trailer of Forum Theatre.

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(A video plays of Forum Theatre, showing the audience interacting with the actors. After it ends, Mrs Thomas resumes the discussion.)

Mrs Thomas:

The Joker makes sure the play continues in the right direction. No magic, alright? The Joker encourages the audience to discuss the situation during and between attempts to change the scenario. The role of the Joker is tricky, a bit like being a teacher—it involves many small decisions in each moment, guiding and facilitating. They ensure the play stays on track while allowing audience interventions, making sure the actors aren't being mistreated and vice versa.

(Mrs Thomas continues to explain as she moves around the room.)

Mrs Thomas:

It might seem like a normal play at first, but the act is dramatising a particular instance of oppression. After the audience watches the scene, it is performed again, and this time, the audience members are invited to intervene. But they can only take on one of the roles in the scene, usually the protagonist or the hero, and they have to try to solve the oppression immediately through a dramatic action that stays true to the situation.

(The students listen attentively as Mrs Thomas continues.)

Mrs Thomas:

You can't just say something magical, like, "I'll call up the government, and the bad guy will be arrested." It needs to be realistic and true to the situation. That's what we call "magic." Neither the actors nor the audience spect-actors can use magic. You can't say, "A dragon comes in and saves the day." That's magic. And we don't do that. Similarly, you can't suddenly change the character's essence. A bully isn't going to just say, "Oh, I've decided I'm going to be nice now," like something out of Riverdale. Sudden changes like that make no sense.

Mrs Thomas:

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You'll notice there's always one extra person who talks to the audience—that's the Joker. They act a bit like a director on stage, ensuring the play progresses correctly without magic or unrealistic changes. The Joker also encourages discussions between different attempts to change the scene. Being a Joker can be tricky. It's easy to leave the group with false optimism or run out of time before everyone is satisfied with the interventions attempted.

(Mrs Thomas pauses to check if the students are following.)

Mrs Thomas:

The Joker must make small decisions constantly, similar to a teacher—like deciding whether to allow additional characters, how many interventions are enough, or when to stop an intervention that isn't working. These decisions are critical to guiding the scene and making sure the interventions remain productive.

(The students nod, understanding.)

Mrs Thomas:

Now, when it comes to Forum Theatre, there are specific rules and conventions. First, we choose and discuss an issue of oppression or discrimination. Then, we create a newspaper headline representing the situation, which is followed by the creation of a tableau, or frozen image, of the situation while speaking the headline out loud.

(Mrs Thomas gestures for attention.)

Mrs Thomas:

Next, we'll improvise a play with action and dialogue that shows how this issue arose and developed. Make sure you have more than one scene to show the development. One person in your group will become the Joker, and you'll rehearse until you feel confident with your characters and scenarios.

(She moves to the front of the room, concluding the explanation.)

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Mrs Thomas:

Once you're ready, the play will be performed as Forum Theatre in front of the audience.

The Joker explains that the scene will be run again, and this time, anyone can call "stop" and replace an actor. However, the new actors must keep within the original tone and character, without adding unrealistic elements or using magic.

(The students nod, getting ready for the next step.)

Mrs Thomas:

After each intervention, stay in character and respond authentically, even if the spect-actor tries to change the situation. It's a form of improvisation—remember the "yes, and..." approach we discussed. At the end of the performance, we'll discuss what happened, what worked, and why certain efforts succeeded or failed.

(Mrs Thomas claps her hands.)

Mrs Thomas:

Alright, let's dive in and practice a little bit of Forum Theatre ourselves!

Creating the Newspaper headlines - tableaux

(Mrs Thomas now directs the students to form groups. The students break off into smaller groups, discussing and forming their tableaux. Mrs Thomas moves around the room, offering guidance.)

Mrs Thomas:

So, usually in conflict, there are three levels.

(The students look up attentively.)

Mrs Thomas:

Number one is latent. This is where the conditions for conflict or bullying exist, but the parties involved aren't consciously aware yet.

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Number two is emerging. This is when some participants recognize that conflict or bullying is taking place, but not everyone is fully involved.

Number three is manifest. This is when the conflict or bullying is clearly evident to all participants and even to outsiders. It's when the situation is deliberately escalating.

(She moves around the room, making sure everyone is following.)

Mrs Thomas:

So today, you're going to be working with those three levels—latent, emerging, and manifest—and you're going to play around with them. You'll create three tableaux, or frozen images, using your body and facial expressions to depict a dramatic scene of a serious manifest situation.

(The students nod, some already forming groups.)

Mrs Thomas:

Once you have that most serious scene, you'll work backward. First, create the manifest tableau—where everyone can see the bullying or conflict is out in the open. Then, work on the emerging tableau, where it's just beginning to get serious but not everyone is fully aware. Finally, you'll do the latent stage, where it's just simmering beneath the surface, but it's not fully visible yet.

(Mrs Thomas gestures to the groups, encouraging them to get started.)

Mrs Thomas:

Now, after you create each tableau, I want you to come up with a headline for each one. This will be like a newspaper headline, something that quickly summarizes the situation in just a few words. For example, you might say, "Student Leaves School After Persistent Online Bullying" or "Charlie's Photos Leak, Chaos Follows."

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(The students start brainstorming, some chatting about the best way to represent their headlines.)

Mrs Thomas:

What do I mean by headline? You all remember from Year Nine English—what’s a newspaper headline? It’s like a title. Think about The Daily Mail or even your Snapchat headlines—those notifications that grab your attention. Something like, “Charlie Caught Cheating—Scandal Erupts” or “Rihanna Pregnant and It’s a Boy!” Those types of headlines.

(The students laugh as Mrs Thomas references examples.)

Mrs Thomas:

So, I want you to think of a title or headline that best represents each tableau. Then, you’ll perform all three tableaus in sequence: latent, emerging, and finally manifest. When you transition from one tableau to the next, either say the headline in chorus or individually.

(She moves through the groups again, checking in on their ideas.)

Mrs Thomas:

You’ll perform the freeze frames as a group, making sure they clearly show the progression of conflict or bullying—how it starts, how it builds, and how it escalates into the final stage.

(She claps her hands to signal the next phase of the activity.)

Mrs Thomas:

Alright, let’s get into small groups! Brainstorm the three levels of conflict—latent, emerging, and manifest—and create an image for each. Just remember, it’s got to be about an online conflict. Once you’ve got your images, think of a word or headline that best represents each tableau.

(The students break into groups, beginning to form their freeze frames.)

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(Students begin arranging themselves into freeze frames, depicting different stages of conflict. Mrs Thomas moves between groups, checking in on their progress.)

Mrs Thomas:

Make sure you come up with a headline for each tableau, just like a newspaper headline.

For example: "Student Leaves School Due to Online Bullying."

(The students discuss ideas for their freeze frames, practicing how to transition between the different stages of conflict.)

Performance and Audience Interventions

(The groups prepare to perform their tableaux in front of the rest of the class. Mrs Thomas gathers the students, and the first group stands up to present their three stages of conflict.

The audience watches attentively.)

Mrs Thomas:

So, let's explore these tableaux and perform them as a group. Does it work? You can even change the scenes as you go along.

(The students get into position for their first freeze frame.)

Mrs Thomas:

So, this group's freeze frame number one is latent—it's only bubbling underneath the surface. What are they representing here?

(The students form groups, preparing to perform their tableaux. The first group steps forward and arranges themselves into their positions for the latent tableau.)

Description of Tableau 1 (Latent Stage): The students stand scattered across center stage (CS), each holding a phone in front of them and looking down with neutral, vacant

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expressions. Their body language is passive, with some students slightly slouched. One student is positioned downstage left (DSL), sitting on the floor with their back turned to the group, emphasizing isolation. The spacing between the characters reflects disconnection, with the use of the empty stage space signaling that the conflict is yet to fully emerge. This tableau captures the latent stage, where tension exists but remains unspoken.

(The students look at the scene.)

Rosie:

Cyberbullying.

Mrs Thomas:

Yes, cyberbullying. Good—cyberbullying. And how do you know that?

(Mrs Thomas waits for responses as the students look at the freeze frame.)

Mrs Thomas:

They're all great, but how do you know it's not a manifest stage? How do you know?

Nia:

Because there's no conflict yet. They're all neutral.

Mrs Thomas:

Great observation! Their facial expressions are quite neutral, but they're all glued to their phones, so there's clearly something going on with the phones.

(She gestures towards the tableau, pointing out the subtle details.)

Mrs Thomas:

Next, we have the emerging tableau.

Description of Tableau 2 (Emerging Stage): The proxemics change dramatically, with the previously isolated student now closer to the others but in a clearly vulnerable position. This student, still located near DSL, is slouching forward, arms slightly raised in a defensive

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posture, as if being held down by an unseen force. Another student stands directly behind them, arms outstretched toward their shoulders, representing the online pressure and control. The aggressor leans in, their body seemingly invading the central student's space, tightening the distance and making the scene feel more oppressive. A third student stands upstage right (USR), looking down at their phone, representing the silent, ever-present nature of online harassment.

(Mrs Thomas walks between the groups, observing the shifting dynamics.)

Mrs Thomas:

So, this is where the conflict is happening, but it may not be obvious to everyone else. What do you think is happening here?

(The students examine the tableau.)

Carly:

It looks like she's being held down.

Mrs Thomas:

Yes! A physical metaphor for the online world. She's being held down by the situation. And what could that be a metaphor for?

(The students think for a moment.)

James:

A big breakdown.

(Mrs Thomas nods in approval, ready to move to the next stage.)

Mrs Thomas:

Ok now for Manifest!

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(The group freezes in this tableau for a few seconds before transitioning into the manifest tableau. The space between the characters narrows further, increasing the intensity of the scene.)

Description of Tableau 3 (Manifest stage): The central character, who was previously isolated, now stands center stage (CS), surrounded by two other students who are positioned very close, invading their personal space. Both aggressors lean forward aggressively, pointing fingers at the central student, who has shrunk back, arms up defensively and body angled away, indicating fear and submission. One student stands upstage left (USL) holding a phone, simulating filming the scene, symbolising the bystander effect in online bullying. The tight, constricted space between the students highlights the escalating nature of the conflict, with the central student visibly overwhelmed by the confrontation.

(The confrontation is emotionally and physically intense, with no room for the central student to escape. The audience watches closely, taking in the symbolism of the scene.)

Mrs Thomas:

Exactly! Fantastic! You don't have to make every tableau literally—you can play around with symbols and metaphors. In this case, she's being isolated or left alone, showing the conflict brewing.

(The students nod in understanding as they move through their tableaux.)

Mrs Thomas:

Now, once you've created your three tableaux, I need you to decide on a headline for each one. You can either say them together as a group or individually before moving into your next tableau.

(Mrs Thomas raises her hand, signaling the next step.)

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Mrs Thomas:

For example, they might freeze in their first tableau, and after three seconds, someone stands up and says, “Cyberbullying on the rise: 50% of students affected.” Then they move into their second tableau, freeze for three seconds, say their headline, and move to the third tableau.

(The students begin discussing their headlines.)

Rosie:

Can I do a single word, like “Dragged” for one of the headlines?

Mrs Thomas:

Yes, you could totally use one word! That’s no problem at all.

(Mrs Thomas moves around, checking in on each group’s progress.)

Mrs Thomas:

Alright, everyone all set? Let’s get practicing. I’ll put you into groups—three for you, four for you.

(The students break into groups, discussing and preparing their scenes.)

(Mrs Thomas moves back to the front, preparing to transition the students into scene work.)

Mrs Thomas:

Okay, now we’re going to take those tableaus and turn them into full scenes. Each scene will begin and end with a freeze, using the tableau that you’ve chosen. You’ll create three scenes, and each scene will have a break in time between them.

(The students listen closely, nodding along.)

Mrs Thomas:

So what do I mean by that? You’ll start with your first tableau, for example, with one group

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standing here and another pointing at them. You start with that freeze, and then you begin the scene—acting it out. It only needs to be short.

(She pauses for a moment to ensure everyone is following.)

Mrs Thomas:

Then, you'll freeze again to signal that you're moving into the emerging tableau. Go into that freeze, act out the scene, freeze again, and then move into the manifest tableau.

(The students begin planning their transitions.)

Mrs Thomas:

Each time you freeze, you're signaling that we're moving into a new part of the conflict—latent, emerging, and manifest. But there's one more thing—you'll have someone in your group acting as the Joker. This means they'll stop the scene at some point and invite the audience to try and change the narrative.

(Mrs Thomas continues walking around the room, guiding the groups.)

Nia:

Are we freezing into the next tableau or the first one?

Mrs Thomas:

I suggest you freeze into the new tableau each time. That way, you're clearly signaling the transition between the scenes.

Nia:

Perfect!

(The students nod in understanding as they get to work.)

Mrs Thomas:

Does that make sense? You'll make a scene out of your tableaux, but someone also needs

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to be the Joker. So you'll have to decide on that person in your group. Alright, off you go—create your scenes!

(The students begin practicing, playbuilding their scenes with energetic discussions.)

Mrs Thomas:

Alright, everyone, can we all sit down now? Thank you. We're going to have Tessa's group perform first. Everyone else, listen out for the Joker—they'll call for you to come in and jump into the scene.

(The students gather around as Tessa's group gets into position.)

Mrs Thomas:

Okay, starting your tableau. Begin!

(Tessa's group performs their first scene. Rosie starts by acting out her character, then freezing.)

Nia:

(Speaking in character) She's crying about it. That's so embarrassing.

(The scene continues until someone calls "Stop!" and jumps in.)

Mrs Thomas:

Freeze! And...action!

(Rosie jumps in again, but Abby calls out "Stop!" and takes over.)

Mrs Thomas:

Okay, let's go—someone else jump in!

(The students begin rotating into the scene, taking on new roles and experimenting with different solutions.)

Reflection and Discussion

(After the interventions, Mrs Thomas gathers the students for a group discussion. They sit in a semicircle on the floor.)

Mrs Thomas:

Alright, how did it feel to step in as a *spect-actor*? What was it like to try and change the scene?

Cameron:

It was difficult. I didn't really know what to do.

Mrs Thomas:

Exactly. These situations aren't easy to fix, and that's what Forum Theatre is about—exploring different possibilities, even if they're not perfect.

(She looks around the room, encouraging more students to share their thoughts.)

Carly:

I felt like there was no right solution because everything kept escalating. The characters were just too driven by the conflict. But I like we can work it out.

Mrs Thomas:

Right. And that's what's important to recognise—it's not about finding the perfect solution. It's about learning through the process.

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Wrapping Up

(Mrs Thomas stands at the front, preparing to wrap up the lesson.)

Mrs Thomas:

That's okay because this is your first time playing around with this style of theatre. It's going to take us some time to get confident. You know how long it took you to feel comfortable playing improv games? It's the same thing here.

(The students nod, understanding.)

Mrs Thomas:

So don't take it to heart—this is just the beginning of the process. We'll have lots of practice playing around with jumping in, being *spect-actors*, and experimenting with these scenes more.

(She smiles at the group.)

Mrs Thomas:

The main thing to take away is that Boal wanted *spect-actors*—the audience—to come in and play out their solutions. It's not going to be clean or easy, and it's not like primary school where you can just say, "Yay, sorted!" We'll have growing pains, just like in real life.

(The students listen attentively, nodding.)

Mrs Thomas:

It's not like I can just tell them to stop, and they'll stop, right? Thank you all for being confident today.

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(The students begin gathering their belongings, chatting amongst themselves as they exit the room. Mrs Thomas watches them leave with a proud smile.)

End Scene/Observation

Appendix 5 - Data Results

5a: Summary of Coding Methods

The table below provides a summary of the core coding methods, Descriptive, In Vivo, and Layered, Multi-Modal Interpretive Analysis, which were central to identifying patterns and themes across the data.

Table 10.6

Summary of Coding Methods

Coding method	Raw text > Relevant text	Repeating Ideas	Themes	Theoretical Constructs > Theoretical Narrative > Research Concerns
Descriptive	Generates subtopics, providing an initial structure for the data.	Organises data, identifying recurrent topics.	Generates a preliminary list of subtopics, forming a thematic structure.	Establishes foundational understanding.
In Vivo	Captures participants' authentic perspectives directly from raw text.	Highlights recurring ideas in participants' own language.	Captures thematic nuances and subtleties in participants' experiences.	Contributes to developing theoretical constructs.

Layered, Multi-Modal Interpretive Analysis	Integrates meaning across verbal, embodied, and artefactual forms of data.	Interprets patterns across data types, including performance and reflection.	Develops themes by interpreting how students expressed meaning through words, movement, and symbolism.	Connects multimodal expressions to broader theoretical constructs, supporting a holistic interpretation of research concerns.
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5b: Descriptive Coding Matrix

Table 10.7

Descriptive Coding Matrix

Descriptive Codes	In Vivo Codes	Source
To help students explore the posted words and images	Posted words and images	Ms Skye
Tableaux was used to explore the dynamics of online personas and digital behaviours	Use of Tableaux	Ms Skye
Exploring empathy through Invisible Theatre and improvisation	Empathy	Mrs Thomas
Use of Tableaux to explore online conflict and bullying	Use of Tableaux	Mr Simon

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Follow a syllabus	Syllabus	Ms Skye
Enabling them to understand that they have choices, such as blocking a person or not taking part in the conversations	Blocking a person	Ms Skye
Tableaux was used to explore the dynamics of online personas and digital behaviours	Use of Tableaux	Ms Skye
Sculpting online personas to reflect their digital identities	Sculpting online personas	Ms Skye
In digital citizenship, there are ethics embedded in it, as well as sensitive understanding and self-growth	Sensitive understanding Self-growth	Mrs Elsa
Exploring emotional resonance with online interactions	Emotional resonance	Ms Skye
Paying attention to your digital footprint or tattoo	Digital footprint or tattoo	Mrs Elsa
Conflict resolution using Forum Theatre	Resolving conflict through Forum Theatre	Mrs Elsa
I believe in the science of teaching.	Science of teaching.	Mr Simon
Teaching relies on knowing the students.	Knowing	Mr Simon
Learning digital citizenship requires an educator who knows them individually and can draw that out.	Knows them individually	Mr Simon

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We are a role model.	Role model	Mrs Thomas
I think being able to lead these respectful discussions is important.	Respectful discussions	Mrs Thomas
Respectfully talking about their peers in the online, real, and drama world.	Respectfully talking	Mrs Thomas
Using invisible theatre as a learning tool	Invisible theatre as learning tool	Mrs Elsa
Exploring power dynamics in online relationships	Power dynamics in relationships	Mrs Elsa
Addressing social issues through digital personas and masks	Digital personas and masks	Mrs Elsa
We use drama, which enables us to look at focus, conflict, actor-audience relationship, symbolism, characterisation, changing roles, and different perspectives.	Focus, conflict, actor-audience relationship, symbolism, characterisation, changing roles, and different perspectives.	Ms Skye
We have looked at scenarios, settings, moods, and atmosphere.	Scenarios, settings, moods, and atmosphere.	Ms Skye
We integrated all the elements of drama.	Elements of drama.	Ms Skye
Technology in the drama classroom should be integrated.	Technology in the drama classroom	Ms Skye
They were excited about Invisible Theatre.	Invisible Theatre.	Mr Simon
I sold them on the Boal and spect-actor.	Boal and spect-actor.	Mr Simon

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Invisible School theatre	Invisible Theatre	Mr Simon
Exploring latent, emerging, and manifest levels of conflict through drama pedagogy	Latent, emerging, manifest conflict	Mr Simon
I am old school and not very computer literate.	Computer literate	Ms Skye
I have already been doing it, but I never known how to focus on it as one.	Focus on it as one	Mrs Elsa
The focus was on bullying and cyberbullying.	Focus was on bullying and cyberbullying	Mr Simon
The word digital citizenship has been drilled into them.	Digital citizenship	Mrs Thomas
Perceive that ethics are overdone subjects.	Ethics are overdone subjects.	Mrs Thomas
In their high school experience, we would cover things like cyberbullying and digital citizenship.	Cyberbullying and digital citizenship	Mrs Thomas
Creating scenes that escalate from online conflict to real-life consequences	Escalating conflict	Mr Simon
The drama teacher must be consistently aware of what is happening.	Consistently aware	Ms Skye
I totally believe I am a lifelong learner.	Lifelong learner	Mrs Elsa

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I think it is important for schools and teachers to stay on top of it as much as possible through continuous learning.	Continuous learning	Mrs Thomas
Investigating digital citizenship behaviours through performance	Digital citizenship	Mr Simon
Brought that into the group collective and discussing within themselves	Group collective	Ms Skye
Part of their play-building process was when they came together and said this has happened to me.	Came together	Mrs Elsa
It transformed into Forum Theatre, getting kids to discuss	Discuss	Mr Simon
Identifying and addressing bystander behaviors in online and offline spaces	Bystanders	Mr Simon
Change their thinking and mindset.	Thinking and mindset	Ms Skye
Define their individuality	Individuality	Ms Skye
The students indicated that the whole experience was provoking, thoughtful, reflective, and triggering.	Provoking, thoughtful, reflective, and triggering	Mrs Elsa
Choosing a digital citizen about the effect that they'll have on the online community	Choosing a digital citizen	Mr Simon
Making a conscious choice to influence their kind of citizenship	Conscious choice	Mr Simon

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A lot of them recognised that they had been bystanders online.	Bystanders	Mr Simon
They could describe digital citizenship in one sentence, and after the unit, they realised it was more complex.	Digital citizenship in one sentence	Mrs Thomas
Gained a deeper understanding of their role	Deeper understanding	Mrs Thomas
Engaging students with the dynamics of online trolling and harassment	Online trolling and harassment	Mrs Thomas
Reflecting on power dynamics and oppression using Boal's Theatre techniques	Power dynamics and oppression	Mr Simon
Use of Tableaux to depict stages of online conflict	Stages of online conflict	Mrs Thomas
My perspective was changed.	Perspective	Lupaw High School Focus Group
My understanding and improved perspective	Improved perspective	Lupaw High School Focus Group
It helped me to believe that people are not exactly as perfect and as amazing as they seem to be online.	People are not exactly as perfect and as amazing as they seem to be online	Madike High School Focus Group
Now, I see how we are digital citizens.	Digital citizens	Madike High School Focus Group

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I became more aware of the connections between online and offline.	Aware of the connections between online and offline.	Montawl High School Focus Group
It brought awareness specifically to the long-lasting impact of something you post on social media.	Awareness specifically to the long-lasting impact of something you post on social media	Montawl High School Focus Group
It gave me more of an insight into what people are thinking.	Insight into what people are thinking	Tedrain High School Focus Group
I can read the situation better online.	Better online.	Lupaw High School Focus Group
Do not post anything without thinking.	Post anything without thinking.	Lupaw High School Focus Group
I have started to be a bit more self-controlled.	self-controlled	Lupaw High School Focus Group
Now, as a digital citizen, I have used it in my day-to-day life to socialise with other people.	Day-to-day life to socialise with other people.	Madike High School Focus Group
Drama pedagogy solidified my skills and attributes.	Solidified my skills and attributes	Madike High School Focus Group
I was able to understand about the digital code of conduct	Knowledge of digital code of conduct	Madike High School Focus Group
I now understand how to interact with people online.	Online interaction	Madike High School Focus Group

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Drama has helped me gain that confidence	Confidence	Madike High School Focus Group
Reflecting on personal responsibility for online interactions through group tableaux	Personal responsibility	Mr Simon
Using empathy, they can show compassion for the person who is going through the experience.	Empathy	Ms Skye
I think they wanted to encourage empathy.	Encourage empathy	Ms Skye
I think they wanted to encourage empathy.	Encourage empathy	Mrs Elsa
Improve their digital citizenship.	Digital citizenship	Ms Skye
I think compassion and empathy were the two biggest things that came out of it for me.	Compassion and empathy	Mr Simon
I saw justice and empathy in the form of theatre in week two.	Empathy	Mrs Thomas
It has made me personally more aware of what I am, what I am doing, and who I am when I am online.	I am aware of what I am, what I am doing, and who I am	Montawl High School Focus Group

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It is just being more empathetic and considering myself in the other person's shoes.	Empathetic	Tedrain High School Focus Group
I think we need more empathy towards such situations	Empathy	Tedrain High School Focus Group
In drama, we must think about the setting and the audience. We are considering not just always about that one person's role but the whole scene.	The whole scene	Tedrain High School Focus Group
Empowering students to challenge online bullying and harassment through Forum Theatre	Boal theatre	Mr Simon
They expressed how it makes them feel when others get involved with comments.	Expressed how it makes them feel when others get involved	Ms Skye
They were very self-reflective and responsible for their own discoveries as well, which made it clear how much they were willing to share and log.	Self-reflective and responsible	Mrs Elsa
I think there was an element of self-discovery when we did the bystander because we did that video in which someone was recording a fight.	Self-discovery	Mrs Thomas

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Students performed comments as part of Instagram interactions	Instagram comment performances	Mrs Thomas
I do not think there was that emotional resonance until they started taking on the roles and having the opportunity to be the victim in those different scenes.	Emotional resonance	Mr Simon
The performances made students confront these emotions	Confront these emotions	Mrs Thomas
The spectator thing influenced my emotions	Influenced my emotions	Tedrain High School Focus Group
I think that really resonated with them, but they probably knew on a superficial level that is what was happening.	Resonated with them	Ms Skye
Then, there was one group that started to focus more on the expanding role the community plays in solving these problems.	Expanding role	Mr Simon
I identified problem-solving among the students when conducting Forum Theatre.	Problem-solving	Mrs Thomas
We had this exercise where we had situations and then tried to resolve them within a few frames.	Resolve	Madike High School Focus Group

5c: Codes and Themes

Table 10.8

Codes and Themes

Codes	Themes
<p>Posted words and images, syllabus, blocking a person, sensitive understanding, self-growth, digital footprint or tattoo, the science of teaching, knowing, knowing them individually, role models, respectful discussions, and respectfully talking.</p>	<p>Theme 1: Responsible Use of Technology and Digital Platforms</p>
<p>Focus, conflict, actor-audience relationship, symbolism, characterisation, changing roles, different perspectives, scenarios, settings, moods, and atmosphere, elements of drama, technology in the drama classroom, Invisible Theatre, Boal and Spect-actor, and Invisible Theatre, Sculpting online personas, power, oppression, emotional responses, snap it post it.</p>	<p>Theme 2: Integrated Learning</p>
<p>Computer literate, focus on it as one, focus was on bullying and cyberbullying, ethics are overdone subjects, and cyberbullying and digital citizenship.</p>	<p>Theme 3: General Focus on Digital Citizenship</p>
<p>Consistently aware, lifelong learner, and continuous learning.</p>	<p>Theme 4: Continuous Learning</p>
<p>The group collective came together and discuss.</p>	<p>Theme 5: Shared Spaces for Learning</p>

<p>Thinking and mindset; individuality; provoking, thoughtful, reflective, and triggering; choosing a digital citizen; conscious choice; bystanders; digital citizenship in one sentence; and deeper understanding, perspective, improved perspective, people are not exactly as perfect and as amazing as they seem to be online, digital citizens, aware of the connections between online and offline, awareness specifically to the long-lasting impact of something you post on social media, and insight into what people are thinking.</p>	<p>Theme 6: Expansion of Perspectives on Digital Citizenship</p>
<p>Digital citizenship, better online, posting anything without thinking, self-controlled, day-to-day life to socialise with other people, solidified my skills and attributes, knowledge of digital code of conduct, online interaction, and confidence, Reflecting on online personas and interactions through role play and tableaux.</p>	<p>Theme 7: Skills and Attributes Development</p>
<p>Empathy, encourage empathy, encourage empathy, compassion and empathy, empathy.</p> <p>Aware of what I am, what I am doing, and who I am, empathetic, Exploration of online personas and digital footprints, exploring empathy through Boal's techniques, and the whole scene.</p>	<p>Theme 8: Empathy and Understanding</p>
<p>Expressed how it makes them feel when others get involved, self-reflective and responsible, and self-discovery.</p>	<p>Theme 9: Self-Expression and Discovery</p>

<p>Emotional resonance: confront these emotions influenced my emotions.</p>	<p>Theme 10: Understanding Emotions</p>
<p>Resonated with them, expanding role, problem-solving, and resolve.</p>	<p>Theme 11: Problem-Solving Skills</p>
<p>Observed collaborative problem-solving during Boal Theatre exercises, Use of Tableaux, Engagement with invisible theatre performances, Use of Forum Theatre during group interactions, Forum Theatre for conflict resolution, reflecting on personal responsibility, Use of freeze frames, sculpting, and image-based activities to explore digital citizenship concepts.</p>	<p>Theme 12: Boal Theatre</p>
<p>Students working together to explore online personas through drama, Observed Tableaux activities that explored online personas, Collaborative problem-solving in digital context exercises, Group discussions and reflections, Group discussions about online trolling, harassment, and responding positively to online comments, Reflecting on personal responsibility, group collaboration through performance.</p>	<p>Theme 13: Collaboration</p>
<p>Engagement with digital dilemmas through roleplay, Engagement with ethical digital decision-making and reflective practices, Exploring online interactions and emotional responses through improvisation and tableaux.</p>	<p>Theme 14: Adequately Engaging</p>

5d: Themes Mapped to Research Questions and Findings

Table 10.9

Themes Mapped to Research Questions and Findings

Code	Themes	Research Questions	Findings chapters
RUT	Theme 1: Responsible Use of Technology and Digital Platforms	How do teachers in NSW interpret, understand, and approach digital citizenship?	- Introducing Digital Citizenship through Drama Pedagogy
IL	Theme 2: Integrated Learning		- Initial Shifts in Student Perceptions and Behaviours - Development of Key Concepts and Competencies
GFDC	Theme 3: General Focus on Digital Citizenship	What issues and approaches had the teachers previously taken when addressing digital citizenship before the research?	- Introducing Digital Citizenship through Drama Pedagogy
CL	Theme 4: Continuous Learning	Does a teacher’s knowledge and understanding of digital citizenship develop throughout the teaching and learning program?	- Introducing Digital Citizenship through Drama Pedagogy

SSL	Theme 5: Shared Spaces for Learning	How can drama pedagogy impact a student's understanding of citizenship in a human-centred online world?	- Initial Shifts in Student Perceptions and Behaviours
EPDC	Theme 6: Expansion of Perspectives on Digital Citizenship		- Development of Key Concepts and Competencies
SAD	Theme 7: Skills and Attributes Development		- Development of Key Concepts and Competencies
EU	Theme 8: Empathy and Understanding	How do the students change the way they interact with others when learning in the blended human-centred and online world?	- Development of Key Concepts and Competencies - Impact and Reflections
SED	Theme 9: Self- Expression and Discovery		- Development of Key Concepts and Competencies
UE	Theme 10: Understanding Emotions		- Development of Key Concepts and Competencies
PSS	Theme 11: Problem- Solving Skills	How do students reflect upon triggers, techniques or strategies that may affect their wellbeing negatively or positively through drama pedagogy?	- Development of Key Concepts and

Appendices

			Competencies - Impact and Reflections
BT	Theme 12: Boal Theatre	How do teachers and students interact within the classroom environment when experiencing and participating in online drama pedagogy?	- Development of Key Concepts and Competencies - Impact and Reflections
C	Theme 13: Collaboration	How do the students and teachers interact, both verbally and through body language, when participating in drama pedagogy in the blended world?	- Development of Key Concepts and Competencies - Impact and Reflections
AE	Theme 14: Adequately Engaging	How well do teachers and students engage with the curriculum-aligned approach to digital citizenship?	- Development of Key Concepts and Competencies - Impact and Reflections

Appendix 6 - u.b.do Program

NSW Department of Education (2019b)

A promotional graphic for the u.b.do program. It features a bright yellow background. In the top left, there is a red circle with a white plus sign followed by the word "Program" in bold black text. Below this, the text reads "The essence of being human in the digital age." followed by a description of the program. In the top right, there is a white circle containing the u.b.do logo, which consists of three overlapping speech bubbles in pink, blue, and yellow, with a white speech bubble icon inside. Below the logo, the text "u.b.do" is written in a bold, lowercase font, and "exploring through doing" is written in a smaller, lowercase font. In the bottom center, there is a photograph of six diverse young people (three boys and three girls) looking at their mobile devices. In the bottom left, there is a globe icon followed by the text "Online at <https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/creative-arts>".

Program

The essence of being human in the digital age.

u.b.do is a five week interactive innovative teaching and learning program aligned to the NSW Stage 4 and 5 drama syllabus addressing the issue of digital citizenship.

Online at <https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/creative-arts>

u.b.do
exploring through doing

Unit overview

- Students will be introduced to how drama can stage issues to generate discussion and provoke change.
- Students will develop knowledge, understanding and skills in playbuilding when navigating structured scenarios of online situations as proactive digital citizens.
- Students will endeavour to understand their role as digital citizens and the meaning of positive engagement in social media.



In this unit, students will develop knowledge, skills, and an understanding of playbuilding through structured scenarios of online situations that will navigate as proactive digital citizens. Using the accompanying [online digital resource](#), students will explore the possibilities of creating hypothetical situations relevant to a contemporary framework. They will create playbuilt scenes stimulated by the forms and conventions of Augusto Boal's 'Theatre of the Oppressed'. Students will develop an understanding of their roles as digital citizens and the meaning of positive engagement in social media. An associated text, *'Impending Everyone'* by [Michael Andrew Collins](#), can be included for additional content or to extend the length of the unit.

In this program, one 'week' is equal to two and a half hours of face to face teaching. Individual lesson plans (75minutes) have been provided for guidance and are linked to each week.

Cross-curriculum content

ICT	Work, employment and enterprise	Civics and citizenship	Difference and diversity	Environment	Gender
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Key competencies

Collect, analyse and organise information	Communicating ideas and information	Working with others and in teams	Problem-solving	Literacy	Numeracy
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Objectives

Students will develop:

Objectives	Stage 4 outcomes	Stage 5 outcomes
Making	A student: 4.1.2 improvises and play builds through group devised processes 4.1.3 devises and enacts drama using scripted and unscripted material 4.1.4 explores a range of ways to structure dramatic work in collaboration with others.	A student: 5.1.2 contributes selects, develops and structures ideas in improvisation and play building 5.1.3 devises, interprets and enacts drama using scripted and unscripted material 5.1.4 explores, structures and refines ideas using dramatic forms, performance styles and dramatic techniques (Boal) and technologies.
Performing	A student: 4.2.3 explores and uses aspects of dramatic forms, performance styles, theatrical conventions and technologies to create dramatic meaning.	A student: 5.2.3 employs a variety of dramatic forms, performance styles, dramatic techniques, theatrical conventions and technologies to create dramatic meaning.
Appreciating	A student: 4.3.2 recognises the function of drama and theatre in reflecting social and cultural aspects of human experience.	A student: 5.3.2 analyses the contemporary and historical contexts of drama

Life Skills

Objectives	Outcomes
1. Making drama that explores a range of imagined and created situations in a collaborative drama and theatre environment	LS.1.1 explores characters, roles, situations and actions through drama activities LS.1.2 explores a variety of playbuilding activities LS.1.3 participates in drama experiences in which role-taking is used to enhance their understanding of ideas and feelings
2. Performing devised and scripted drama using a variety of performance techniques, dramatic forms and theatrical conventions to engage an audience	A student: LS.2.1 explores dramatic forms and theatrical conventions LS.2.2 participates in the preparation of drama works and theatrical productions
3. Appreciating the meaning and function of drama and theatre in reflecting the personal, social, cultural, aesthetic and political aspects of the human experience.	A student: LS.3.1 experiences a variety of drama or theatre performances LS.3.2 identifies and responds to the elements of drama or theatre in performances LS.3.3 recognises that drama and theatre performances can communicate meaning and ideas.

Drama 7-10 Syllabus © NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) for and on behalf of the Crown in right of the State of New South Wales, 2003.

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Differentiation

This unit draws on a variety of ways to effectively differentiate for all students, including High Potential and Gifted students. For example, the entire unit responds to June Maker's model of gifted education in that it works with the four areas of - content, process, environment and product. The drama environment is naturally altered from the normal classroom environment and allows students to explore and express. The content is challenging and created by teacher and students. The process is teacher led and this could be an area where if the students have ideas and suggestions then incorporating these ideas should be strongly considered even if it takes a different direction for a period of time. The final product is created by the students and to consolidate the idea of not putting a ceiling on the students the assessment task could be modified to include wording that allows for the students to discuss other or further options with their piece (location, medium, etc.).

Additionally, grouping could be used as effective differentiation, and this may entail different groups working on different tasks or aspects of the tasks.

Challenging questions and ideas based on the work of Frank Williams' (1993) model of differentiation have also been included for each lesson. These learning opportunities could be self-selected by the students or assigned as homework by the classroom teacher and may be addressed at any point throughout the teaching and learning sequence.

Suggested Assessment

In this unit, students are introduced to how drama can stage issues to provoke discussion and change by experimenting with Boal's notion of 'Theatre of the Oppressed'. Students will experience how image theatre can be used beyond the classroom to examine oppression when devising original scenes and creating performances using the 'u.b.do' unit content as a stimulus. Through image theatre, they will better understand the complex nature of socio-cultural issues in digital technologies.

Formative

Students outline ways in which they use social media (both positively and negatively) and a range of social scenarios that are dictated by the conventions of digital citizenship. Teachers should monitor and provide feedback on student logbooks and progress.

Summative

Students understand and appreciate their online practices and that of others through performing the themes of 'u.b.do'. They will also complete an assessment task at the end of the unit. Copies of the assessment task can be downloaded through the links below in a format adaptable for your school templates.

- [Stage 4 assessment task \(DOCX 55.25KB\)](#)
- [Stage 5 assessment task \(DOCX 56.82KB\)](#)

Evidence of Learning

By the end of this unit students will have devised a playbuilt piece on the concept of 'digital citizenship'. They will have incorporated Boal techniques and conventions to stage their ideas.



Program

Lesson sequence and content	Teaching and learning activities	Differentiation	Associated text learning opportunities
<p>Week 1</p> <p>Lesson: 'The Rules of The Game'</p> <p>Focus - The notion that theatre has the capacity to raise social, cultural and human centred issues. Boal techniques and methods are used to explore these issues.</p>	<p>Lesson 1</p> <p>In this week students begin looking at the building blocks of 'The Theatre of the Oppressed', in which they will focus on invisible theatre and Boal's games.</p> <p>A short piece of 'invisible theatre' (a pre-planned scenario) is used as an effective means of demonstrating to students the concept that theatre can scrutinise an issue and can stage a variety of perspectives on that issue to prompt a response from audiences. This scenario could be a controversial online issue, (e.g. defamatory Instagram/snapchat post). The students involved will have been briefed beforehand by the teacher and will carry out the scenario as they enter the class. Following the ensuing class discussion, the 'invisible theatre' is unmasked and the teacher explains the concept of Boal's 'invisible theatre', (see the digital resources) to show the effectiveness of enactment to provoke discussion and subsequent change on an issue.</p> <p>What is u.b.do.? (See digital resources and set up www.mentimeter.com).</p> <p>Students should examine the title and subtitle. What does it mean to be human in the digital age? How do online and social rituals differ?</p> <p>Boal explored ideas of oppression and prepared actors through drama games. Students will investigate some of these, including, mirroring, modelling, movement and improvisation games, and discussions about how these ideas affect and influence an audience.</p>	<p>Extension</p> <p>Provocative question. Human's communicate in many ways. Why will human communication always be complex?</p> <p>Creative reading skills During this unit, in consultation with the teacher, the student will select, read and provide a review on a relevant play.</p> <p>Creative listening skills. Students find and listen to a podcast that is relevant to the unit. They outline the narrative arc or structure of the podcast.</p> <p>Life skills Students could participate in the suggested activities outlined in the life skills section of the lesson plans and summarised below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invisible theatre • Real life contexts • Social masks • Scaffolding activities • Forum theatre examples. <p>Content questioning can be mostly memory recall and reflection using Revised Bloom's Taxonomy.</p>	<p>Students are introduced to the play 'Impending Everyone' by Michael Andrew Collins by reading the first three scenes. This play uses theatre to highlight the issue of privacy, online lives and dangers inherent in how vulnerable online users can be.</p> <p>Plot line: An email is sent to every member of a school community revealing that their online communications, data and browsing etc has been hacked. A website that reveals all has been created and will be made publicly available by the end of lunch.</p> <p>Pages 14 – 21</p> <p>Themes: How embarrassing is your search history? What happens if your friend accidentally sees that weird thing on the desktop of your laptop? Can you be forgiven for keeping that awful photo on your phone?</p>



Lesson sequence and content	Teaching and learning activities	Differentiation	Associated text learning opportunities
<p>Focus - Students will learn about the 'Theatre of the Oppressed' by exploring the techniques of Augusto Boal's forum theatre</p>	<p>Lesson 2</p> <p>After a short revision of the last lesson's ideas, and a physical warm-up, students will research and explore a sequence of practical activities to help them explore ideas of online oppression, and examining latent, emerging and manifest conflict, leading to a forum theatre performance.</p> <p>Students will reflect on how theatre can be a catalyst for discussion and change, as well as reflect on their own online personas.</p>		
<p>Week 2</p> <p>Lesson: 'The Seen and Unseen'</p> <p>Focus - Students will focus on the difference between anti and pro-social behaviour online by exploring ideas through symbols and the role of the 'Spectator' in Boal's image theatre.</p>	<p>Lesson 3</p> <p>In this week students think about the following inquiry question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> what are they seeing online or not seeing? <p>By exploring symbols and analogies to highlight the difference between the seen and unseen online, students will be engaged in a series of warm ups adapted from Boal's games for actors and non-actors such as 'The Peruvian Ball game' and 'Three wishes'. The intention of these exercises is to highlight how messages - both written and physical have intended meaning and received meanings.</p> <p>Students also consider vocabulary significant in the online world and create images to explore their understanding and the negative impact they can present. They then create or express a scene inspired by the following words: post, snap, screenshot, unfriend, feed, hashtag.</p> <p>Students 'sculpt' an image of oppression, (Boal's Image theatre) using a scenario where a student has been made to feel powerless online, the students perform these and then are asked to interpret, comment and change the image into one where the subject is now powerful. Students discuss the possible ways the scenario could be spun into a positive and find images or words that empower, such as resilience. As spect-actors students are empowered to change scenes that create a more positive experience.</p>	<p>Extension</p> <p>Analogy. How is the online world like a trip to the fun fair (Luna Park)?</p> <p>Organised random search. Would you have joined Mark Zuckerberg's, thefacebook? Would you have created thefacebook? Justify your response.</p> <p>Study creative process. Read Mark Zuckerberg's or Augusto Boal's or Steve Jobs' biography and analyse their traits and characteristics.</p> <p>Life skills</p> <p>Students could participate in the suggested activities outlined in the life skills section of the lesson plans and summarised below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scaffolding activities Image theatre Script writing. <p>Content questioning can be mostly memory recall and reflection using Revised Bloom's Taxonomy.</p>	<p>Students could read the next three scenes (4,5,6) of 'Impending Everyone'</p> <p>Pages 15 -34.</p> <p>These scenes should prompt discussion about the seen and unseen in our online lives. What 'secrets' do we hide in our activities online and how can trolls hide their nasty comments etc by anonymity online.</p> <p>At this stage in the play the characters are coming to terms with the fact that their online activities may soon be public and the implications of this.</p>

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Lesson sequence and content	Teaching and learning activities	Differentiation	Associated text learning opportunities
<p>Lesson: 'The Following'</p> <p>Focus - symbols, masks and transformation</p>	<p>Lesson 4</p> <p>Students further explore Boal's theatre techniques as a means of transforming an idea and modelling a positive future action. Warm-ups such as the 'A' game, 'Leap frog', 'The Sword of Paris' express how we feel by using voice, movement and influencing others to follow or defend what we do online.</p> <p>Students will focus on how symbols and masks can be used to enhance dramatic meaning as represented and transformed in their scenes.</p> <p>Students are encouraged to view a series of symbolic images from the powerpoint provided and to discuss the relevance of each (or one) in relation to their representation of online behaviour. They unpack the concept of the 'Symbol' as a dramatic element and explore ideas to create a performance using transformational acting. Students also incorporate the mask as a powerful image in order to create a scene based on their u.b.do experience.</p> <p>Game references are fully described in Augusto Boal's 'Games for actors and non-actors'.</p> <p>Additional resources for the teacher on Boal's use of the mask can be found on pages 139-143 of 'Games for actors and non-actors.'</p>		
<p>Week 3</p> <p>Lesson 1: 'Insta'</p> <p>Focus - Highlight the expectations we have for technology and unpack the effects of instant gratification on the individual human and collective psyche.</p>	<p>Lesson 5</p> <p>These lessons are purposed to provide space for discussion and reflection on the way in which technology has developed innate expectations and behaviours that provide us with instant gratification. It explores the proactive and maladaptive online behaviours and social behaviours we have developed when we communicate using technology.</p> <p>Students unpack preconceived notions of technology as a fast paced and unfaltering entity and study their behaviour when asked to wait for it to load or for someone to respond to them. It may provide the basis for students to question their Insta 'friends' as opposed to meaningful real relationships.</p>	<p>Intuitive expression. Try two ways. You are posting a negative comment about someone, what is racing through your mind? You receive a negative comment from someone, what is racing through your mind? Evaluate situations. What if all internet actions took sixty seconds to be completed?</p>	

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Lesson sequence and content	Teaching and learning activities	Differentiation	Associated text learning opportunities
<p>Lesson: 'Everyone's a critic'</p> <p>Focus - Use of verbatim and playbuilding techniques to survey the current ways in which we receive 'feedback' online when posting content.</p>	<p>Using Boal's 'thought tracking' exercise, students provide insight into each other's state of mind as they work through scripted and non-scripted scenarios.</p> <p>Students use tools in the form of curated Instagram images, scripts in the form of text message feeds and comment walls from Youtube available in the digital resource package. These tools provide real world examples of scenarios and experiences we face as digital citizens with regard to what we post online and the reasons why we do it.</p> <p>Lesson 6</p> <p>Students experiment with a live 'comment wall' using Padlet as well performance exercises to contrast the differences between the digital and social masks we wear when providing online commentary. Verbatim theatre tactics are paired with improvisation to offer strategies for when students experience communication breakdowns.</p> <p>Students use improvisation tactics to survey how we adapt and manipulate what we post online based on our intentions for posting. Are we posting for the sake of it? To share our lives with our friends? Are we posting to gain likes and comments? Or a combination of all three?</p> <p>Students express their online behaviour using physical theatre and playbuilding techniques originated by Frantic Assembly. They devise content for their performance task and document their process using video and logbook reflections.</p>	<p>Creative writing skills. Write a letter from the point of view of someone involved in online bullying.</p> <p>Life skills</p> <p>Students could participate in the suggested activities outlined in the life skills section of the lesson plans and summarised below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you see activity? • Everyday life activity • Suggested situations • Message feed activity • Social media recall. <p>Content questioning can be mostly memory recall and reflection using Revised Bloom's Taxonomy.</p>	
<p>Week 4</p> <p>Lesson: 'Film It / Post It'</p> <p>Focus - 'If it hasn't been posted, did it happen?'</p>	<p>Lesson 7</p> <p>In this week students will focus on the difference between Anti and Pro social digital behaviour online by exploring ideas through Boal's workshop activities and Games. They will investigate u.b.do and what this can mean to them and their choices in a digital world.</p>	<p>Extension</p> <p>Attribute listing. List what it is that makes a person 'good' online.</p>	

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Lesson sequence and content	Teaching and learning activities	Differentiation	Associated text learning opportunities
<p>What are the responsibilities of the individual and the group?</p> <p>Lesson: 'The influencer and the influenced'</p> <p>Focus - Public vs Private and the Bystander</p>	<p>By exploring the world of what we post and the responsibilities of the bystander, teachers can encourage students to reflect on their human perspective in the online digital world.</p> <p>These lessons are purposed to highlight the technological aspects of 21st century media and communication that allows digital users to record and post without reflection or in a passive fashion neglecting potentially the external impact, until they might just feel it themselves. The idea of digital citizenship will be inherent in the activities they now respond to, both physically and in theory.</p> <p>Lesson 8</p> <p>Students will be engaged in collective warm ups that contribute to their knowledge base as well as the necessary skills and experience in developing the performance assessment task.</p> <p>Warm ups in group and point-of-view experience are encouraged to contribute to the process. Physical theatre and focus in action and the rhythm with chairs (Boal), the person we fear and our protector, as well as complete the image.</p> <p>The main work of both weeks includes enquiry questions and both monologue and scene devising from frozen tableaux that can then become contributions/material for the final assessment.</p> <p>The students will watch some footage (including from cybersmart) to encourage their responsible reflections: What can the bystander do with the footage? What might be the consequences of posting such material? Do you behave differently online as to how you are face to face? Is peer pressure a factor?</p> <p>Game references are fully described in Augusto Boal's 'Games for Actors and Non Actors'.</p>	<p>Examples of habit. Create something that could persuade others to change how they behave online? This change could be achieved through negative reinforcement or positive reinforcement. It could be in the form of a poster, song, speech, performance, artwork, other...</p> <p>Skills of search. Search for any performance companies currently working with Boal's techniques.</p> <p>Tolerance for ambiguity. Monitoring content on the internet is necessary but it is also censorship? Do you agree?</p> <p>Visualisation skills. Visualise and present, through performance or drawing, the stages of life and thoughts for someone who has experienced or perpetrated online bullying.</p> <p>Students requiring further extension can be encouraged to write scripts and duologues. Others can make short films that are examples of what is posted.</p>	

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Lesson sequence and content	Teaching and learning activities	Differentiation	Associated text learning opportunities
		<p>Life skills</p> <p>Students can create an image collage or photograph stills that they then caption.</p> <p>Depending on levels of ability they can create posters to promote digital citizenship.</p> <p>Students could participate in the suggested activities outlined in the life skills section of the lesson plans and summarised below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Still images activity • Collage • Storyboard with adaptations. <p>Content questioning can be mostly memory recall and reflection using Revised Bloom's Taxonomy.</p>	
<p>Week 5</p> <p>Lesson: 'Caught in the Net'</p> <p>Focus - The vulnerability of humans online as they navigate the internet and social media. Being mindfully present in both a physical and digital world simultaneously is emphasised.</p>	<p>Lesson 9</p> <p>During this week students will be introduced to exercises that are based on the concept of 'caught in the net': avoiding online 'traps' as well as safely and responsibly navigating the internet and social media. The warm up for lesson one for example will draw on Boal's image theatre as students create a group sculpture that requires them to physicalise and verbalise how individuals can be vulnerable online. In the warm up for the second lesson, 'Grandma's Footsteps' a classic Boal game has been adapted so that Grandma is in role as a savvy internet user who 'catches' online predators as they approach her. It is expected that the teacher throughout this week's lessons will draw on examples and exercises covered in previous weeks and lessons. An important focus during this week involves the teacher as facilitator encouraging students to draw upon their learning in previous weeks and the performances they have devised during these</p>	<p>Extension</p> <p>Discrepancy. What don't we know about the internet?</p> <p>Adjustment to development. How has the internet changed the 21st Century?</p>	<p>Students could read the final three scenes (13, 14, 15) of 'Impending Everyone' Pages 63 - 85</p> <p>These scenes should prompt discussion about getting caught in online traps. The character Chris uses his parents credit card to buy 'skins' online & then uses 'skins' to gamble. The character Ash discovers a nasty troll comment was in fact sent by her boyfriend to her instagram post.</p>

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Lesson sequence and content	Teaching and learning activities	Differentiation	Associated text learning opportunities
<p>Lesson: Performance</p> <p>Focus - students present and evaluate their group devised performances</p> <p>'Pro-social'</p> <p>Focus - The human condition presents itself in new digital frontiers.</p>	<p>lessons to synthesise their learning in this unit through enactment. Students will be required for example to create a 'melodrama' script replacing hero/victim/villain with online references.</p> <p>Lesson 10</p> <p>The summative assessment task to be assessed requires students to create a final performance that consolidates the learning they have engaged in during all weeks of the unit. Constructive critical feedback as facilitated by the teacher should assist students in reflecting critically in their logbooks on their own performances and those of others.</p> <p>Groups will enact online social media etc. platforms in exercises they engage in to show how online potential traps such as a targeted ad on Instagram have the potential to expose us to manipulation if we do not employ them intelligently.</p> <p>Creating and presenting final performances as well as revising and consolidating experiential learning from previous weeks will be an important focus of the final lesson this week. Students are required to present their finalised performances and to hand in a reflection statement based on constructive critical discussion facilitated by the teacher following each performance.</p>	<p>Life skills</p> <p>Students could participate in the suggested activities outlined in the life skills section of the lesson plans and summarised below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sculpted images • Playback theatre • Frozen image activity <p>Content questioning can be mostly memory recall and reflection using Revised Bloom's Taxonomy.</p>	<p>Two of the characters who were friends on messenger discover real friendship has a lot more challenges.</p>

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Feedback

It is an essential tool to provide timely, specific, [meaningful feedback to students](#). This was achieved in the following ways:

See an example below (please amend to suit your specific needs)

- Oral feedback from the teacher which included individual student discussions and group discussions and critiques.
- Criteria sheets
- Reinforcement cues, comments and ideas written in their process diary by the class teacher.
- Peer assessment
- Mind mapping
- Progress performances
- Self-progress logbook entries.

Program evaluation

A written statement from the teacher about the overall success of the program.

Implementation and review

Program implemented end of term _____, date _____ / _____ / _____

Future modification recommended? _____

Registration

This unit was completed:

Term: _____

Week: _____

Date: _____ / _____ / _____

Class teacher signature: _____

Resources: _____



Glossary of Generation Next Speak

Acronym	Definition
LOL	Laugh out loud
LMAO	Laughing my a** off
BRB	Be right back
GTG	Got to go
TTYL	Talk to you later
YEET	A way of expressing excitement.
Y	Yes
N	No
FOMO	Fear of missing out
ROFL	Rolling on the floor laughing
ILY	I love you



Unit Glossary

Term	Definition
Bystander	A bystander is a witness who sees or knows about bullying happening to someone else.
Citizenship	Citizenship can be formally defined as the legal relationship between an individual and a state. More broadly, citizenship is the condition of belonging to social, religious, political or community groups, locally, nationally and globally. Being part of a group carries with it a sense of belonging or identity which includes rights and responsibilities, duties and privileges. These are guided by the agreed values and mutual obligations required for active participation in the group. In the Australian Curriculum citizenship incorporates three components – civil (rights and responsibilities), political (participation and representation) and social (social values, identity and community involvement).
Digital citizen	A digital citizen refers to a person who has the knowledge and skills to effectively use digital technologies to communicate with others, participate in society and create and consume digital content.
Digital footprint	A digital footprint is a trail of data you create while using the Internet. It includes the websites you visit, emails you send, and information you submit to online services.
Digital tattoo	A digital tattoo refers to the permanent nature of a person's actions and communications online, also known as a digital footprint. A footprint can, however, be washed away, whereas a tattoo is permanent.
Forum theatre	Forum Theatre consists, in essence, of proposing to a group of spectators, after a first improvisation of a scene, that they replace the protagonist and try to improvise variations on his actions. The real protagonist should, ultimately, improvise the variation that has motivated him the most.
Joker	A neutral party at the centre of the performance development. This person takes responsibility for the logistics of the process and ensures a fair proceeding, but must never comment upon or intervene in the content of the performance, as that is the province of the "spect-actors".
Side coach	Side coaching is the process of giving directions to actors while they are playing a scene.
Spect-actor	This term refers to the dual role of those involved in the process as both spectator and actor, as they both observe and create dramatic meaning and action in any performance.
Tableau/tableaux	A group of models or motionless figures representing a scene; a tableau vivant. Tableaux - more than one.

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