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Digital and socio-civic skills development and young people's perceptions of digital citizenship in the UK

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Digital Citizenship is an emerging field of research but there is still a lack of knowledge into what works and how to implement educational practices to develop digital citizenship. The objective of this paper is to evaluate the relationship between young people's participatory profile and their perceptions of the development of digital and socio-civic skills, and to understand how young people exercise their citizenship in the United Kingdom. The study consists of 124 responses to an online questionnaire. The analysed data suggests that the current framing of citizenship education curriculum in the UK is still focused on more traditional forms of political participation and more work needs to be done in terms of developing citizenship education for a digital era.

Keywords
citizenship education, digital skills, socio-civic skills, participation, youth

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Introduction

Citizenship education is centred around the preparation of young people for their roles and responsibilities as citizens and the role of education (through schooling, teaching and learning) in that preparatory process (Kerr, 1999). The development of citizenship education is influenced by the context and geopolitical framing of a society and of a given moment in time. Historically speaking, some of the motives for promoting citizenship education have included shaping a sense of belonging to a nation-state and to renew a feeling of national identity among citizens.

Traditionally, citizenship education has emphasized formal political participation and has developed a citizen's relationship to a nation-state (De Schaepmeester et al., 2022). However, this traditional view has been critiqued by academics, diversity advocates and social movements for its narrow approach to engagement and participation, and a somewhat limited view of citizenship education (Vromen, 2017). Consequently, other authors (e.g. Knowles and Castro, 2019) establish three distinctions that help frame how citizenship education can be perceived and taught: (1) Conservative citizenship, that understands citizens as social and political actors who are a collective part of a society and have shared traditions and values, (2) Liberal citizenship, where individuals are autonomous and make their own decisions and maintain a social contract with one another and finally, (3) Critical citizenship, that understands citizens as active participants in the society and are involved in transformative actions for a more socially just community. The latter, high- lights how citizenship education focuses on active social engagement, where people aim to make adifference in the community, they have a willingness to volunteer, and the understanding that an opinion is only one of the many possible views (Veugelers, 2011). This view of citizenship education is also being broadened by the digitalization and progress of society and people's way of life. The increasing presence of digital technologies and social media has created a hybrid environment where people must learn to navigate both face-to-face and online scenarios. This dual scenario, with a wider range of social interactions and behaviours, requires a different skillset to be an engaged, informed and literate citizen (Vorderer et al., 2016). These technologies are now so embedded in people's lives that it is difficult to understand political and social engagement without understanding how people use these digital tools and spaces (Maher and Earl, 2019) for learning and for social and civic participation. There is extensive literature and policy papers, such as DigComp 2.2., regarding digital skills which tend to include skills for managing and using of information and data, for. Communicating and creating digital content, as well as, managing and securing information and digital content and other aspects related to ethics and responsibility (Vuorikari et al., 2022). On the one hand, in relation to socio-civic skills can be understood as a combination of knowledge (social, political, cultural, historical), abilities and attitudes, to interact with an audience and to express solidarity and interest in solving community problems. Other researchers (McNaughton et al., 2018) suggest that the term also includes intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects of prosocial actions like empathy and mutual understanding and self-control. In other words, possessing the social, emotional and cognitive skills necessary to adapt effectively in a variety of social environments for building cordial relationships with other people and managing social situations, coexistence and the responsible exercise of democratic citizenship (Álvaro and Rubio Núñez, 2016) to improve their community and surroundings.

An emerging term that responds to the challenges in updating citizenship education and providing both digital and socio-civic skills development is Digital Citizenship Education. During the past decade, the field of Digital Citizenship has become a growing field of research that has gained traction within the academic community (Richardson et al., 2021). Despite, a lack of a common theoretical framework or core definition there are various works (Blaj-Ward and Winter, 2019; Choi, 2016; Hennig Manzuoli et al., 2019; Ohler, 2011; Ribble and Bailey, 2011; Richardson and Milovidov, 2019; Jones and Mitchell, 2016) regarding this topic. The term first appears referring to the norms of behaviours regarding the use of digital technologies (Ribble and

Bailey, 2011), it then later went on to detail several core elements, such as: digital responsibility, digital rights, digital safety and digital security. In addition to this, Ohler (2011) conceptualized this perspective as a focus on character education in looking at digital citizenship as a set of norms, behaviours and actions of good citizenship applied to a digital format. Meanwhile, Martin (2006) found that people with digital and effective citizenship skills are those who embrace creative, critical and safe use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in order to fulfil a given motivation, being able to adapt to a new set of knowledges and attitudes that are necessary in this day and age to be competent in digital scenarios (Murawski and Bick, 2017). In other words, digital citizenship can be understood as a process by which people and collectives become committed to social justice, critically analysing the social, political and economic consequences of their actions and the impactof digital technologies in their lives, deliberating and taking action, by building alternative and emancipatory technologies and techno-pedagogical practices (Blaj-Ward and Winter, 2019). This coincides with Hennig Manzuoli et al. (2019), that establish three pillars of training required to exercise digital citizenship: (1) democratic knowledge and behaviours for citizen engagement; (2) social skills that include communicative abilities, critical and axiological attitudes, creativity and finally, (3) digital literacy that include management and handling of information.

More recently, digital citizenship seems to have less to do with technical, safety and online civility issues and more to do with participation in the worldwide online conversation, or more global participation that requires a new set of skills (Blaj-Ward and Winter, 2019). On their part, Choi (2016) identified four conceptual categories relating to digital citizenship: (1) ethics, (2) media and information literacy, (3) participation/engagement and (4) critical resistance, addressing how a person or a group can challenge the status quo and promote social justice through digital technologies. This conceptual framework, not only the soft skills and technical aspects of the digital world but also higher order thinking skills and other aspects that come into play when exploring digital citizenship and that could influence exercising citizenship (Choi and Cristol, 2021; Choi et al., 2017; Emejulu and McGregor, 2019). Finally, in their work for the European Union, Richardson and Milovidov (2019) state that digital citizenship is the ability to engage competently and positively with digital technologies and participate actively and responsibly in communities at all levels in all lifelong learning settings. In a sense, digital citizenship becomes another front to fight for social justice centred on the process of gaining skills and becoming engaged citizens (Lauricella et al., 2020). Consequently, Peart (2022) explores how digital and socio-civic skills are core factors in developing digital citizenship. These authors state there is a need to start looking at digital and social skills as promotors of active social and political engagement as well as key tools for trans- forming societies in terms of social justice, equity and human rights. Both skillsets are necessary and interdependent when creating a civic culture and, above all, they are decisive to increase the level of engagement (Dias Fonseca and Potter, 2016) in face-to-face settings, and even more so, in digital environments and both need to include critical reflection to be active participants in a com- munity and in decision-making processes (Richardson and Milovidov, 2019). Although, taking into account the findings of Hoskins et al. (2017), the argument can be made that, in a modern society, existing inequalities can also be projected or amplified in a digital environment due to the lack of access, knowledge and competencies when using digital technologies for socio-political issues.

This work aims to contribute to this emerging field of research regarding Digital Citizenship and although there are growing publications in this area, most papers are related to measuring digital citizenship (Connolly and Miller, 2022; Harris and Johns, 2021; Fernández-Prados et al., 2021). This paper aims to understand how citizenship in today's global and digital society is being framed and understood by young people in educational settings. Young people may have some proficiency in handling digital technologies and scenarios, but this is not synonymous with possessing a specific skillset for managing, evaluating the information and engaging with political and social issues. As Dewey (1985) argued, education is necessary because it allows people to participate in democracy, because without trained, informed, literate people with a sense

of citizenship, a strongdemocracy would not be possible.

Methods

This study uses exploratory research and a descriptive design to measure the development of digital and socio-civic skills, collecting both quantitative and qualitative data via an online questionnaire. The objective of this study is to understand how young people frame actions related to citizenship and explore the relationship between young people's participatory profile and digital and socio-civic skills. Considering the previous research objective, the following hypotheseswere set:

- H1: People who participate in political and social organizations will have a higher level of digital skills than the rest of the participatory profiles.
- H2: People who participate in political and social organizations will have a higher level of socio-civic skills than the rest of the participatory profiles.

The participants of the study were selected using non-probabilistic convenience sampling by contacting educational centres, universities and national youth organizations and councils. During theparticipant selection process, informed consent was obtained from all respondents. The study sample consists of 124 participants aged 16–35 years old, from the United Kingdom (UK) of which 23.4% are men and 76.6% women. Participants are divided into four age groups: 16–19 (49.2%), 20–24 (49.2%), 25–29 (19.4%) and 30–35 (7.3%). Finally, considering the participation profile of participants, the sample consists of people who participate in social and political organizations (16.1%), people who participate in social organizations only (17.7%) and in political organizationsonly (1.6%), people who do not participate but declare an interest in a political and/or social organization (48.4%) and those who do not participate nor declare an interest in any political or social organization (16.1%).

The data collection instruments were developed and empirically assessed for the purpose of this study which was an online questionnaire with favourable scientific guarantees, regarding content and construct validity and reliability that measures the development of digital and socio-civic skills (DIGISOC) (Peart et al., 2020). The questionnaire was applied through Microsoft Office forms platform. First, informed consent from all participants was obtained and then information collected regarding digital and socio-civic skills development. The instrument was created by conducting an extensive literature review and was subjected to a content validation by consulting a group of experts and construct validation via Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) with a pilot sample of 215 participants.

The definitive version of the instrument is made up of seven sociodemographic questions that relate to sex, age, educational level, employment situation, sexual orientation, political ideology and participatory profile, as well as 59 items based on a 5-point Likert-type response scale where 1 represents 'Never' and 5 'Always' and two open-ended questions.

The DIGISOC Questionnaire is grouped in two dimensions (digital skills (α = 0.906) and socio-civic skills (α = 0.902) and 11 sub-dimensions. The digital skills dimension is comprised of five sub-dimensions, which are: Management and use of information and data (α = 0.845), Communication skills (α = 0.646), Digital content creation (α = 0.682), Management and security of information and digital content (α = 0.7368) and Ethics and digital responsibility

(α = 0.727). The socio-civic skills dimension is made up of six sub-dimensions, that are: Social and political behaviours and attitudes (α = 0.843), Digital empathy (α = 0.800), Social and digital engagement (α = 0.727), Critical thinking (α = 0.672), Democratic attitudes (α = 0.558) and Prosocial behaviour (α = 0.539). In addition to an open-ended question exploring in what way do young people exercise your citizenship?

The quantitative data collected with the DIGISOC questionnaire was analysed using SPSS (v.26). Before statistically contrasting the hypothesis, the appropriate calculations were carried out to decide whether to use a parametric or non-parametric statistical tests. These tests were used to contrast the normal distribution, homoscedasticity and randomness of the data series. Due to the nature of the variables and the contrasted models, non-parametric tests were applied. The qualitative data collected through the open-ended questions of the same instrument and then a content analysis was conducted to describe participant's responses to the open-ended questions relating tohow they exercise their citizenship, using open coding to classify participant's answers with Qualitative Data Analysis Software ATLAS.ti.

Results and discussion

Results regarding digital skills development and the participationprofile of participants

The first hypothesis of this study explores the relationship between participatory profiles and digital skills development.

The descriptive analysis for subdimension 1, Management and use of information and data (DS_1) and subdimension 2, Communication skills (DS_2), shows that people who participate in social and political organizations have higher mean levels of development than the rest of profiles, followed by people who do not participate but declare an interest in social and political organizations and followed by those who participate in social organizations. Afterwards the rankings show people who participate in social organizations followed by people who do not participate nor has an interest and finally the results show people who participate in political organizations to have thelowest levels regarding DS_1 and DS_2.

Regarding subdimension 3, Digital content creation (DS_3), the results show that people who participate in social and political organizations have higher mean levels of development than the rest of profiles, followed by those who participate in social organizations and those who do not nor has an interest in social and political organizations. Afterwards the rankings show people who do not participate but declare an interest in social and political organizations, followed by those who participate in political organizations to have the lowest levels regarding DS_3.

Subdimension 4, Management and security of information and digital content (DS_4), the results show that people who participate in social and political organizations have higher mean levels of development than the rest of profiles, followed by both non-participatory profiles favouring those who do not share and interest in other organizations. Finally, the rankings show people who participation in social organizations and then, those who participate in political organizationsto have the lowest levels regarding DS_4.

Finally, concerning subdimension 5, Ethics and digital responsibility (DS_5), the results show that people who participate in social and political organizations have higher mean levels of development than the rest of profiles, followed by those who do not participate nor take an interest in any organizations and those in political organizations. Finally, people who do not participate but declare an interest in social and/or political organization and those who participate in social organizations have the lowest levels regarding DS_5.

The results were analysed using Kruskal-Wallis H test to determine if there are statistically significant differences between the participation profiles. As stated in previous sections this

dimension is comprised of five sub-dimensions. The following results detail the subdimensions (Supplemental File I).

All in all, participants who participate in both political and social organizations consistently have a profile with the highest scores in each case and the rest of the participation profiles vary depending on the corresponding subdimension.

After analysing the descriptive data, a Kruskal-Wallis H test was carried out on the data regarding participation profiles and digital skills subdimensions: DS_1 ($p = 0.240$), DS_2 ($p = 0.320$), DS_3 ($p = 0.087$), DS_4 ($p = 0.449$), DS_5 ($p = 0.752$). Consequently, the statistical data shows no significant differences among participation profiles and the subdimensions of digital skills. Nevertheless, considering the limited sample and the fact that DS_3 is close to the level of statistical significance,this result may vary.

These results partially confirm that participation profiles are related to a person's digital skills level. In general, people who participate in both social and political organizations tend to have higher digital skills development. Results that were also confirmed by Checkoway (2011) indicating that in some cases, these skills are visible through multi-activism in different types of organizations; others on online forums and even with those who do not engage with their community. All in all, the descriptive data coincides with the similar research work conducted in the Spanish con-text (XXXXXXX 2022). However, the inferential analysis in this study shows no statistical differences. Even though the research does contradict other studies (Xu et al., 2019) which state that social media and Internet self-efficacy are positive predictors of digital citizenship and influentialfactors in an individual's competence relating other social, political and pedagogical aspects of digital technology use, as the results do not confirm this argument. Finally, it also questions the findings of Choi (2016), who stated that digital citizenship is increasingly paramount and involves being digitally literate and having a combination of skills, knowledges and understanding that young people need to learn before they can participate fully and safely in an increasingly digital and socially active world. Digital technologies and social media play a very important role for young people in the consumption of political and social information (Gleason and von Gillern, 2018). However, the use of these technologies has become a concern due to the rise of misinformation and data mismanagement (e.g. US elections, the United Kingdom's EU referendum and the rising conflicts in Eastern-European countries). The increasing concern over how technologies areinfluencing democratic processes indicate a need to prepare citizens, particularly young people, to deal with these kinds of threats (King, 2019) through the development of citizenship education ina digital era (LeCompte et al., 2020).

Results regarding socio-civic skills development and the participation profile of participants

The second hypothesis of this study explores the relationship between participatory profiles and socio-civic skills development.

The descriptive analysis for subdimension 1, Social and political behaviours and attitudes (SCS_1) shows that people who participate in social and political organizations have higher mean levels of development than the rest of profiles, followed by people who participate in social organizations and those who do not participate but have an interest in social and/or political organizations. Afterwards, the rankings show people who do not participate nor have an interest and thosewho participate in political organizations have the lowest levels regarding SCS_1.

Table 1. Kruskal-Wallis H Test for participation profile and digital skills.

H.1.	DS_1	DS_2	DS_3	DS_4	DS_5
Kruskal Wallis – H	5.498	4.692	8.117	3.692	1.911
df	4	4	4	4	4
Sig.	0.240	0.320	0.087	0.449	0.752

Table 2. Kruskal Wallis H-Test for participation profile and socio-civic skills.

H.2.	SCS_1	SCS_2	SCS_3	SCS_4	SCS_5	SCS_6
Kruskal Wallis- H	36.309	7.835	5.476	4.771	7.092	6.826
df	4	4	4	4	4	4
Sig.	0.000*	0.098	0.242	0.312	0.131	0.145

*Case is significant at the 0.05 level.

Regarding subdimension 2, Digital empathy (SCS_2) the results show that people who participate in social and political organizations have higher mean levels of development than the rest of profiles, followed by people who do not participate nor have an interest in social or political organizations and then whose who do share an interest. Finally, the rankings show that people who participate in only social and only political organizations have the lowest levels regarding SCS_2.

In reference to subdimension 3, Social and digital engagement (SCS_3) and subdimension 6, Prosocial behaviour (SCS_6), the results show that people who participate in social and political organizations have higher mean levels of development than the rest of profiles, followed by people who do not participate nor have an interest in participating and then those who participate in social organizations. Finally, the rankings show people who do not participate but have an interest in participating and those who participate in political organizations have the lowest levels regarding SCS_3 and SCS_6.

The results for Subdimension 4, Critical thinking (SCS_4), shows that people who do not participate nor have an interest have higher mean levels of development than the rest of profiles, followed by people who participate in social and political organizations and those who do not participate but have an interest in a political or social organization. Afterwards, the rankings show people who participate in social organizations only and political organizations only have the lowest levels regarding SCS_4.

Finally with respect to subdimension 5, Democratic attitudes (SCS_5), the results show that people who participate in social and political organizations have higher mean levels of development than the rest of profiles, followed by people who participate in political organizations and then, those who do not participate but have an interest in a political or social organization. Finally, the rankings show people who do not participate nor have an interest and those who participate insocial organizations have the lowest levels regarding SCS_5.

All in all, participants who participate in both political and social organizations are consistently the profile with the highest scores in each case except Critical Thinking (SCS_4) and the rest of the participation profiles vary depending on the corresponding subdimension (Table 1).

The results were analysed using Kruskal-Wallis H test to determine if there are statistically significant differences between the participation profiles. As stated in previous sections this dimension is comprised of six sub-dimensions. The following results detail the subdimensions (Table 2).

After analysing the descriptive data, a Kruskal-Wallis H test was carried out on the data regarding participation profiles and socio-civic skills subdimensions: CSC_1 (p = 0.000), CSC_2 (p = 0.098), CSC _3 (p = 0.242), CSC _4 (p = 0.312), CSC _5 (p = 0.131), CSC _6 (p = 0.145). Consequently, the statistical data shows a significant difference (p = 0.000) in subdimension 1, regarding social and political behaviours and attitudes and participation profiles. In all other cases there were no statistically significant differences.

A post hoc analysis was conducted to determine what participation profiles show significant differences, regarding social and political behaviours and attitudes (p = 0.000) (Table 3).

The results of the post hoc analysis show significant differences between people who participate in social and political organizations and all other cases: participation in social organizations (p = 0.000). Participation in political organizations (p = 0.006), those who do not participate but declare and interest (p = 0.000) and people who do not participate nor declare an interest in political and/or social organizations (p = 0.000). In all cases favouring those who participate in both social and political organizations.

These results partially confirm that participation profiles are related to a person's socio-civic skills level. In general, people who participate in both social and political organizations tend to have higher socio-civic skills development. In fact, statistical differences were found in the subdimension, Social and political behaviours and attitudes, which addresses the actions that people undertake and their mind-set regarding social and political issues, said actions include keeping up with current political and social issues, being part of social networks for political or social matters, engaging with others, valuing the importance of political knowledge. The implications of which could be due to a traditional approach to citizenship teaching and a lack of digital education in classrooms or including the use of social media in civics education or for social justice issues. These results partially support with the findings of Grobshäuser and Weißeno (2021) who claim that participation experience has no effect on pupils' political knowledge and the willingness to participate in politics in the future. However, the framing of citizenship education and pedagogical activities may have a possible influence on how civic engagement and citizenship is exercised, which in turn, would contradict Maher and Earl (2019) regarding the digitalization of this field (De-la-Garza-Montemayor et al., 2019).

Results from content analysis of open-ended question onhow young people understand citizenship

In order to understand how young people frame actions related to citizenship a content analysis of qualitative data, has been applied to the open-ended question responses, which can be defined as the interpretation of content through the systematic classification of codes and themes to provide knowledge and understanding of the study phenomenon (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). The data was collect then analysed using open coding (Saldana, 2009) via the qualitative analysis software Atlas. Ti. The following codes emerged from their responses (Table 4).

As shown in Table 4, regarding the frequency of codes for understanding citizenship, the results highlight voting (n = 62) as the predominant action to exercise citizenship, followed by participation and volunteering in organizations (n = 35), demonstrating social and political behaviours and attitudes (n = 27) and alluding to the importance of education and getting informed (n = 24). However, those actions that are least frequent in the participant's responses are: using public services (n = 4), understanding the impact of online and face-to-face settings (n = 3), inter-action with others (n = 3) and finally, participating in social movements (n = 3). These results wereclassified following Li's (2020) civic engagement classification who determines three dimensionsto excising citizenship. Firstly, Latent civic engagement, which includes donating, fundraising,

Table 3. Multiple comparisons post hoc analysis regarding social and political behaviours and attitudes and participation profiles.

(I) Participation profile	(J) Participation profile	Mean Diff.	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Conf. Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Participates in social and political organizations	Participates in social organizations	0.848	0.181	0.000*	0.330	1.36
	Participates in political organizations	1.518	0.435	0.007*	0.273	2.76
	Does not participate but declares an interest in political and/or social organizations	0.892	0.151	0.000*	0.459	1.32
	Does not participate nor declares and interest in political and/or social organizations	1.140	0.185	0.000*	0.610	1.67
Participates in social organizations	Participates in social and political organizations	−0.848	0.181	0.000*	−1.367	−0.330
	Participates in political organizations	0.669	0.433	1.00	−0.570	1.90
	Does not participate but declares an interest in political and/or social organizations	0.0436	0.146	1.00	−0.3747	0.462
	Does not participate nor declares and interest in political and/or social organizations	0.292	0.181	1.00	−0.226	0.810
Participates in political organizations	Participates in social and political organizations	−1.518	0.435	0.007*	−2.763	−0.273
	Participates in social organizations	−0.669	0.433	1.00	−1.909	0.570
	Does not participate but declares an interest in political and/or social organizations	−0.625	0.421	1.00	−1.832	0.580
	Does not participate nor declares and interest in political and/or social organizations	−0.377	0.435	1.00	−1.622	0.867
Does not participate but declares an interest in political and/or social organizations	Participates in social and political organizations	−0.892	0.151	0.000*	−1.325	−0.459
	Participates in social organizations	−0.043	0.146	1.00	−0.462	0.374
	Participates in political organizations	0.625	0.421	1.00	−0.580	1.832
	Does not participate nor declares and interest in political and/or social organizations	0.248	0.151	1.00	−0.184	0.681
Does not participate nor declares and interest in political and/or social organizations	Participates in social and political organizations	−1.14	0.185	0.000*	−1.671	−0.6106
	Participates in social organizations	−0.292	0.181	1.00	−0.810	0.226
	Participates in political organizations	0.377	0.435	1.00	−0.867	1.622
	Does not participate but declares an interest in political and/or social organizations	−0.248	0.151	1.00	−0.681	0.184

*Case is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 4. Frequency of codes for understanding citizenship.

Codes of understanding citizenship	Frequency
Voting (in elections or referendums)	62
Participation in (social and/or political) organizations and volunteering	35
Social and political behaviours and attitudes	27
Importance of education and getting informed (relating to participation and current events).	24
Digital and social implication	17
Lack of citizenship knowledge	14
Not sure of the concept or their answer	12
Critical thinking	8
Advocacy and empowerment actions	7
Empathy	6
Interest in specific social issues (climate change, LGBT, Black Lives Matter. . .)	6
Management of information and technologies for participation	6
Using public services	4
Impact of online and face-to-face settings	3
Interaction with others	3
Participation in social movements	3

volunteering, and educational activities. Secondly, manifest non-mainstream political participation that understands participating in deliberative bodies and voting for youth councils and finally, manifest mainstream political participation such as election voting and activism. These results merged with the data collected from the quantitative strand, provides an initial insight into how citizenship education is addressed in the United Kingdom. The results show a major tendency towards traditional and formal political engagement. There is also a perceived lack of citizenship which coincides with Janmaat et al. (2014), highlighting the low status of citizenship education and the lack of robust evidence and research. Martin et al. (2019) found that more instruction is needed on digital citizenship for students and that teachers are insufficiently prepared to provide lessons or serve as role models for digital citizenship but are becoming increasingly aware of its importance (Hollandsworth et al., 2011; Hoskins et al., 2017).

Conclusions

The aim of this paper was to understand how young people scope actions related to citizenship and to evaluate the relationship between their participatory profile and digital and socio-civic skills development. The findings show that respondent's participation profiles and digital and socio-civic skills development show statistically significant differences in social and political participation profiles and social and political behaviours and attitudes. In other words, young people who actively engage with social and political organizations have higher competence in this sub-dimension. However, the results also draw on more traditional forms of participation. There are profound differences into the perception of citizenship activities from young people in the UK in comparison with their European counterparts. They could therefore be at risk of falling short of broader and deeper conceptualizations of political engagement and citizenship, especially if national policy diverges further after Brexit. This study provides an initial viewpoint of how digital citizenship iscurrently being framed in the UK.

The importance of promoting an up-to-date pleura of citizenship activities, including digital engagement and alternative means of getting involved should be a key issue for policymakers and citizenship educators for education younger generations in a global and digital society.

Considering the current geopolitical and social challenges that democracies are facing, there is a growing need for educational institutions to actively contribute so that young people can appreciate and put into practice values such as democratic values and social justice and gain agency in social and political matters both online and offline situations. Consequently, citizenship requires abroader definition and should have a strong digital foundation.

Although the scientific guarantees of the instrument are highly favourable, we recognize the study's limited sample size and further studies, and educational policies are needed on educating in alternative means of participation. In the era of digital citizenship, efforts to respond to changes in the digital and global society, lay with revitalizing citizenship education and preparing students to be competent in economic and work productivity, digital and global security, and in digital media. The results could also point towards shortcomings in data and information management and may prove challenging for young people exercising their citizenship or getting informed and engaged. These factors are very crucial for the sustainability of democracy. When educating youth in digital citizenship we also need to consider the learning process provided not only from formal education but also non-formal settings like volunteering or participating in social and/or political organizations. Moreover, there is a need to design, implement and review the development of digital competence and subsequent sub-dimensions in the classroom, since it is a core element of democratic practice, along with higher order thinking skills.

Young people may be more fluent in handling digital technologies, but this is not synonymous with having a developed set of skills to manage and evaluate information, data and digital content and engage socially or civically with issues. While developing social and civic knowledge is key in providing youth with the skills that are necessary to be active citizens, there is also a need for a framework for developing digital citizenship and engagement to contextualize said actions in the present time.

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Supplemental material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

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