TWG 5: Safe and Responsible Internet Use in a Connected World: Teaching Critical Thinking and Accountability to Promote Cyber-Wellness
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Cyber-wellness (CW) involves an understanding of online behavior and keen awareness of how to inform and protect oneself in cyberspace. The focus of CW is on helping students to become responsible digital learners and citizens. Given the broad reach of the World Wide Web—and access to children which that provides—information and media literacy, and awareness of the potential dangers inherent in participating in that environment, has become increasingly important. Ensuring that young people develop a deep understanding of the importance of the need to take responsibility for their online safety (including how their online behaviour and activity affects both oneself and others) and developing skills to critically assess online information, will be essential for improving CW moving forward.

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Our work has been guided by a set of questions:
1. What information can be trusted; how to recognize and deal with fake news; what information should be posted online and what not; how to develop information literacy and media literacy?
2. How we can make sure that children and youngsters feel safe in the digital world and that they can take such responsibility for their own use of technologies; how young people and others can recognize and deal with cyberbullying, predators, phishing and potential identity theft?
3. How can public awareness of online children's protection and cyber-wellness (digital citizenship notion) be improved?
4. What kind of policies (at micro, meso, macro level) should be developed in order to promote CW?
5. What activities and practices can promote and develop young people's CW? How could and should school curricula be changed?

To promote and develop CW we need to look beyond school, and consider informal as well as formal learning contexts. We need to be aware of the multiple stakeholders involved from teachers and parents to community members and commercial technology providers. A key aim should be to instill a healthy scepticism (critical thinking) in young people and ensure that they are proactive. Young people need to be empowered through the development of attitudes and skills. They need resilience which must be developed through experience, risk-taking, and failure. Young people must be enabled to help themselves.

Issues

- We need to unpack cyber-wellness and the elements/characteristics of cyber-wellness; link this to wellness – to solidify and contextualise our understanding.
- Developments in technology are presenting threats to maintaining cyber-wellness (e.g. increasing surveillance, managing students' personal behavior, data and learning analytics).

- We need to convince others of the importance/value of the idea of overall wellness.
- We need diverse, flexible and sustainable practices to support the development of cyber-wellness across learning environments within social contexts in a civil society (cultures, socio-economic backgrounds, ideologies, etc.).

Identified Current Misalignments

1. The focus is on cyber-wellness when it should be focused on wellness more broadly. Cyber-wellness is a component of wellness.
2. Rather than being focused on the cyber-well-being of the learner, the role of technology in education systems is driven by outside forces (commercial interests, government entities, political interests, propaganda, etc.).
3. The focus tends to be on setting limits and regulation, rather than focusing on a strength-based approach that encompasses balanced skill-building towards empathy, compassion, self-regulation, self-awareness, community awareness and support structures.
4. We are lacking guidance, training, and tools for practitioners that ground theory and practice. Current curricula do not effectively integrate well-being.

'Emerging' New Alignments

We view these as emerging trends that need to be accounted for rather than solutions:
- The heightened importance of the ability to comprehend the validity of information.
- Artificial intelligence is emerging as a new digital approach in education.
- Stakeholders have access to much more data than ever before.

Strategies and Actions:

Strategies:

- Create a balance between learning opportunities and use of protocols in cyber-wellness education [1] [4].
- Have educators take more responsibility in developing these practices [2].
- Create an understanding of the mutual relationship between technology and humans; we are shaping the technologies that we use and that the technologies that we use are shaping us [3].
- Establish an ongoing cycle of evaluation of the technologies that we use [1] [2].

Actions:

- Develop consensus on a concise definition of wellness and cyber-wellness (social, psychological, physical and cognitive) [1] [4].
- Increase awareness of the fact that cyber-wellness is part of overall wellness [1].
- Promote self-awareness of how we learn and are influenced by technology [2][3][4].
- Increase involvement of young people in designing and conducting research and informing policy and practice [1] [3] [4].
- Develop and integrate communities:
  - to provide peer-to-peer support in response to issues that arise [3].
  - of stakeholders for discussing and determining the proper use of technology [3].
- Provide guidelines so that stakeholders can make informed choices relating to cyber-wellness [2].
- Encourage stakeholders to integrate wellness across curricula [3][4].