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INVESTIGATING AND SUPPORTING STUDENTS' ENGAGEMENT WITH THE IMPLICATIONS OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Nearly all young Canadians use the internet, computers, and other digital technologies daily (Statistics Canada, 2017). However, most do so without understanding the implications these technologies have for their learning, their life, and the world (Smith, 2014). Recent critical research on digital technologies underlines a troubling disconnect: teachers and students are increasingly reliant on these technologies without considering the ways they influence their lives, their learning, and issues of social or environmental justice (Ávila & Pandya, 2012; Jenson et al., 2010; Jones et al., 2013; Richardson, 2013; Selwyn et al., 2016; Voogt et al., 2011). When students use digital technologies without critically engaging with the technologies' social and environmental implications, several negative consequences arise: (1) the internet can diminish students' ability to discern credible information (Peters, 2017; Rainie, 2016) or engage with dissenting ideas (Flaxman et al., 2016; Karlsen et al., 2017); (2) social media and related technologies can lessen students' presence and self-confidence (Best et al., 2014; Turkle, 2014); (3) student assessment is frequently tracked through digital portals in ways that have questionable impacts on student engagement (Henrie, 2016; Kohn, 2016); (4) students portray themselves online in ways that often contribute to prejudicial understandings of identity (Dahya, 2016; Nakamura, 2008); (5) data that is gathered on young people as they use the internet feeds into extensive relations of capital and exchange, sometimes at the user's expense (Kennedy, 2016; Kop, Fournier, & Dourand, 2017); and (6) digital technologies have growing environmental and ecological impacts (Terranova, 2007), including the material resources and energy that these technologies require (Dayarathna et al., 2016; Shehabi, 2016), as well as the inequitably distributed labour necessary for producing, supporting, and recycling them (Nakamura, 2013; Roberts, 2016). Whereas current research has begun to suggest how teachers might support students' critical cultivation of digital literacies (Alvermann et al., 2018; Hinrichsen & Coombs, 2014; Ito et al., 2013; Lee & Soep, 2016; Rowsell, 2013), less is known about how and whether teachers are engaging in these practices. My research explores the institutional contexts that shape how and whether teachers critically engage secondary students in the social and environmental implications of digital life.