

SUMMER RESEARCH 2024/25

PROJECT ABSTRACT



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

PROJECT # 13

SUPERVISOR/S:	Dr Marta Estelles & Andrew Doyle
PROJECT TITLE:	Online safety education: global policy networks and agendas
FIELD:	Digital citizenship education
DIVISION/SCHOOL:	DEDU - Te Kura Toi Tangata School of Education
PROJECT LOCATION:	Hamilton

PROJECT ABSTRACT:

Context

Online safety has increasingly become an issue in schools worldwide. For both teachers and students, online safety problems, from technological addiction and sleep deprivation through to cyber bullying and defamation, are presenting unprecedented challenges beyond schools' managements control. The pressing nature of these issues combined with other material conditions, such as underfunded public systems and neoliberal administration models, have presented a breeding ground for external organisations – both for profit and non-profit – to develop in this field. Private organisations interested in funding and developing educational programmes and resources to keep young people safe online have proliferated in the last decade: from Google to Disney, from 5Rights Foundation to NetSafe. With differing agendas, Ed-Tech companies, foundations, philanthropies and social enterprises are currently dominating the debate over online safety education and face little resistance. Indeed, as scholars have noted (Black et al., 2022; Third et al., 2019), there has been little debate over the hidden narratives of digital citizenship that these online safety education providers espouse and seek to transmit. With this project, we aim to explore the network of private actors (for profit and non-profit) involved in the provision of online safety education at a global scale and their role in shaping online safety education discourses. This works builds upon our recent studies on approaches to online safety education in the literature and the provision of online safety education in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Focus

In this project, we would like to map the global network of policy actors involved in the provision of online safety education and examine their role in shaping online safety discourses. Our inquiry will begin with a mapping of the 'global education policy field' (Lingard & Rawolle, 2011) to then move towards a 'network ethnography' (Ball, 2020) of the specific mobilities and interactions within the network. This approach will allow us to better understand not only the flows and spaces of configuration of digital safety discourses, but also the private interests involved in the spread of 'narratives of inevitability' regarding digital technologies and neoliberalism.

Opportunity

This proposed study provides an opportunity for a Summer Research Scholar to develop their understanding of online safety education and global policy networks in education. The student will have the opportunity to contribute to academic publications and to develop their academic skills related to data collection and management, qualitative analysis, academic writing and research dissemination.

References

- Ball, S. J. (2020). Following policy: Networks, network ethnography and education policy mobilities. In B. Lingard (Ed.), *Globalisation and Education* (pp. 126–144). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429464454>
- Black, R., Walsh, L., Waite, C., Collin, P., Third, A., & Idriss, S. (2022). In their own words: 41 stories of young people's digital citizenship. *Learning, Media and Technology*, 47(4), 524–536. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439884.2022.2044848>
- Lingard, B., & Rawolle, S. (2011). New scalar politics: Implications for education policy. *Comparative Education*, 47(4), 489–502. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050068.2011.555941>
- Third, A., Collin, P., Walsh, L., & Black, R. (2019). *Young People in Digital Society: Control Shift*. Palgrave Macmillan UK. <https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-57369-8>

STUDENT SKILLS:

- Detail oriented and able to self-manage multiple tasks
- Ability to summarise effectively and make connections between texts and data sources
- Good academic writing skills and broader communications skills
- Willingness to seek support from University services; for example, attending available training sessions to support document-based research and/or the use of analysis software
- Ability to work in teams

PROJECT TASKS:

1. Review project publications to date
2. Conduct 4-5 interviews
3. Review interview transcripts after AI transcription
4. Collating data from websites (data management)
5. Conduct preliminary analysis of qualitative data
6. Collaborate in framing the dissemination of the research

EXPECTED OUTCOMES:

- Student's Research Poster (as per clause 6 of the [Scholarship regulations](#))
- Corrected transcripts (after AI transcription) for 4-5 participant interviews
- Preliminary findings of the research (in collaboration with project team)
- Collaborative writing the first draft of a journal article and/or conference presentation