

Development of Scenarios for 2021 eQuality Project Youth Summit

By Sandrine Haentjens, *Faculty of Social Sciences,
University of Ottawa*

Under the supervision of Valerie Steeves, *Associate Professor
Centre for Law, Technology and Society, University of Ottawa*

Background

The current research project is being conducted in support of the eQuality project (EQ), a partnership of researchers, policy makers, educators, and community groups interested in understanding how corporations collect data about children and youth and use that data to shape their attitudes and behaviours. With the goal of addressing the policy areas that young people deem important, EQ is organizing a 2021 Youth Summit that will bring together Canadian teens for a structured dialogue with policymakers about these issues.



The primary question driving the current research concerns how deliberative dialogue can be used to help young people articulate their concerns about networked spaces to policymakers. To answer this question, research is being conducted on deliberative dialogue as a communicative tool to inform the development of case studies that will be used to focus the discussion during the Youth Summit.

Introduction

Deliberative dialogue (DD) can best be understood as a knowledge translation strategy that allows empirical evidence to be considered in context alongside the tacit knowledge of participants (Boyko et. al., 2012). Practically, DD is a discursive process among stakeholders that facilitates a shared exploration of different perspectives (Hwacha, 2005). In the policy context, DD promotes the evaluation of stakeholder values, and the trade-offs associated with pursuing certain policy directions (Plamondon et. al., 2015).

Four issues have been selected, and are being crafted into case studies or "scenarios" to guide the deliberative dialogue process of the Youth Summit. The case studies reflect the findings from qualitative research that EQ has conducted over the past five years, pertaining to the concerns of Canadian youth regarding their relationship with networked spaces. The first case study will focus on the monetization of online content, and the ways in which this privileges corporate content over content designed specifically for youth. Second, the privacy issues associated with personalized learning software will be explored in a case study to highlight the need for policy attention regarding the appropriate scope of educational institutions' surveillance capacity. Third, a case study will be developed to explore moderation of online discussions, including the need to identify "bots" designed to shift political discourse in particular ways. Last, the youth experience on online gaming platforms will be explored through a case study that focuses on the racist and misogynistic language prevalent on these forums.

Methodology

The research process began with a literature review focused on public discourse and what constitutes a healthy public sphere. Next, a thematic analysis of the focus group transcripts was conducted to identify overarching themes in youth concerns regarding networked spaces. Once several themes were extracted, a search for online exemplars of the identified issues was completed. After accumulating this preliminary information, the process of drafting fictional stories that embody the main elements of the thematic analysis and the exemplars began. These fictional stories are the basis of the case studies that will be used to guide the discussion at the Youth Summit itself. Throughout every stage of the research project, youth advisors were consulted to ensure that our research and the plan for the Youth Summit resonates with the needs and perspectives of young people.

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Significance/Conclusion

By providing the youth participants with a platform to discuss issues identified as important and connecting them with policymakers, the Youth Summit has the ability to illuminate policy areas that lack political attention and/or stringency. Once the Summit has occurred, policymakers will have the unique ability to employ the knowledge gained from the youth participants in creating or amending policy to address such issues.

References

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Contact information

E-mail: shaen083@uottawa.ca