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Governing the production of digital citizens: policy translations among OECD, Brazil, Ghana, and Sweden

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ARTICLE

GOVERNANDO A PRODUÇÃO DE CIDADÃOS DIGITAIS: TRADUÇÕES DE POLÍTICAS ENTRE OCDE, BRASIL, GANA E SUÉCIA

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RESUMO: A crescente influência da governança educacional global, moldada por racionalidades tecnopolíticas de organizações multilaterais, como a OCDE, frequentemente direciona agendas nacionais para a construção de políticas educacionais relacionadas ao uso de tecnologias digitais na educação básica. A partir desse contexto, o objetivo desta pesquisa é analisar como o que chamamos de “cidadão digital” é construído discursivamente como sujeito governável em documentos da OCDE, o que reverbera em documentos curriculares nacionais do Brasil, de Gana e da Suécia. A fundamentação teórica ancora-se no conceito de governamentalidade de Foucault e na noção de tradução de políticas de Ball, Maguire e Braun. Como contorno metodológico, propomos uma análise contrastiva e documental desses marcos regulatórios, observando como as diretrizes globais são interpretadas em diferentes contextos socio-históricos. Como resultados e discussões, o artigo identifica três posições de sujeito recorrentes, porém localmente diferenciadas: o cidadão digital tech-savvy, o adaptável e o produtivo. Demonstra-se que, embora a OCDE apresente a competência digital como um imperativo técnico neutro, as políticas nacionais apropriam-se desses discursos e os refratam. Em conclusão, o estudo argumenta que a educação atua como um espaço de fabricação de subjetividades voltadas à produtividade e competitividade neoliberal. Compreender essas traduções é essencial para interrogar as racionalidades políticas das reformas educacionais contemporâneas e imaginar formas de cidadania que transcendam os imperativos de mercado.

Palavras-chave: cidadão digital, tradução de políticas, capitalismo digital.

GOVERNING THE PRODUCTION OF DIGITAL CITIZENS: POLICY TRANSLATIONS AMONG OECD, BRAZIL, GHANA, AND SWEDEN

ABSTRACT: The growing influence of global educational governance, shaped by the technopolitical rationalities of multilateral organisations such as the OECD, has steered national agendas towards developing educational policies on the use of digital technologies in basic education. Such influence is discursive and takes diverse forms in national contexts. This research analyses one effect of those policies: the *digital citizen* or the discursively constructed, governable subject present in OECD documents, with reverberations in national curriculum documents in Brazil, Ghana, and Sweden. Anchored in Foucault’s concept of governmentality and Ball, Maguire, and Braun’s notion of policy translation, we deploy a

contrastive and documentary analysis of these regulatory frameworks, observing how global guidelines are interpreted in different socio-historical contexts, and how they constitute similar yet distinct constructions of who should be and what characterises the digital citizen. The analysis identifies three recurring but locally differentiated subject positions: the tech-savvy digital citizen, the adaptable digital citizen, and the productive digital citizen. The results show that, although the OECD presents digital competence as a neutral technical imperative, national policies translate these discourses and refract them through national concerns and priorities. In conclusion, we argue that education acts as a space for the fabrication of subjectivities geared towards neoliberal productivity and competitiveness. Understanding these translations is essential for questioning the political rationalities of contemporary educational reforms and imagining forms of citizenship that transcend market imperatives amid increasing pressure to embrace the promises of a digitalised world.

Keywords: digital citizen, policy translation, digital capitalism

GOBERNANDO LA PRODUCCIÓN DE CIUDADANOS DIGITALES: TRADUCCIONES DE POLÍTICAS ENTRE LA OCDE, BRASIL, GHANA Y SUECIA

RESUMEN: La creciente influencia de la gobernanza educativa global, configurada por las racionalidades tecnopolíticas de organizaciones multilaterales como la OCDE, ha orientado las agendas nacionales hacia el desarrollo de políticas educativas sobre el uso de tecnologías digitales en la educación básica. Dicha influencia es discursiva y adopta formas diversas en los contextos nacionales. Esta investigación analiza un efecto de esas políticas: el *ciudadano digital*, o el sujeto gobernable construido discursivamente, presente en los documentos de la OCDE, con repercusiones en los documentos curriculares nacionales de Brasil, Ghana y Suecia. Anclados en el concepto de gubernamentalidad de Foucault y en la noción de traducción de políticas de Ball, Maguire y Braun, desplegamos un análisis contrastivo y documental de estos marcos normativos, observando cómo las directrices globales se interpretan en distintos contextos sociohistóricos y cómo constituyen construcciones similares pero diferenciadas sobre quién debe ser y qué caracteriza al ciudadano digital. El análisis identifica tres posiciones subjetivas recurrentes pero localmente diferenciadas: el ciudadano digital tecnológicamente competente, el ciudadano digital adaptable y el ciudadano digital productivo. Los resultados muestran que, aunque la OCDE presenta la competencia digital como un imperativo técnico neutral, las políticas nacionales traducen estos discursos y los refractan a través de preocupaciones y prioridades nacionales. En conclusión, sostenemos que la educación actúa como un espacio para la fabricación de subjetividades orientadas a la productividad y la competitividad neoliberales. Comprender estas traducciones es esencial para cuestionar las racionalidades políticas de las reformas educativas contemporáneas e imaginar formas de ciudadanía que trasciendan los imperativos del mercado en medio de la creciente presión por acoger las promesas de un mundo digitalizado.

Palabras clave: ciudadano digital, traducción de políticas, capitalismo digital.

INTRODUCTION

A growing body of scholarship has highlighted how global education governance is increasingly shaped by technopolitical rationalities that fuse technological infrastructures with political forms of control, often disguised as technical neutrality or policy innovation (see Gorur et al., 2019). International organisations such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) have become key architects of these rationalities, using digital tools, indicators, and comparative metrics to shape educational agendas worldwide. Kirchgasler and Gomez Caride (2025), for instance, show how the

OECD's Global Teaching InSights platform functions not merely as an instrument of teacher development but as a mechanism for governing through visibility, crafting a scientifically sanctioned image of the "global teacher" calibrated for performance, comparability, and depoliticised reform. Similarly, Clark's (2025) work on UK higher education demonstrates how the rhetoric of "digital empowerment" recycles neoliberal logics of competition, individualisation, and market efficiency, under the guise of progressive transformation.

This article builds on these debates by shifting attention from institutional actors and teacher subjectivities to the discursive construction of the *digital citizen* in national curriculum and policy documents from Brazil, Ghana, and Sweden. In doing so, it examines how global policy discourses, particularly those associated with the OECD, are recontextualised within distinct national settings. Unlike more familiar educational figures such as the teacher or learner, the digital citizen is the discursive construction of a governable subject whose significance extends beyond schooling into labour markets, civic participation, and the digital economy. As a subject discursively constructed in policy, education is connected not only to pedagogy but also to the broader imperatives of digital capitalism, in which adaptability, productivity, and entrepreneurship are deemed essential to maintaining national competitiveness.

Despite growing scholarship on OECD influence in education (Gorur et al., 2019; Kirchgasler and Gomez Caride, 2025; Clark, 2025), less attention has been paid to how the digital citizen is discursively assembled and translated across contrasting national policy contexts. This is the gap to which this study responds. By focusing on Brazil, Ghana, and Sweden, we do not seek to establish comparative hierarchies but to examine how a seemingly global policy discourse is refracted differently through historically and politically situated processes of translation. Brazil, which has recently moved closer to OECD educational policy frameworks, displays a normative profile of policy translation that emphasises curricular standardisation and legal consolidation, while selectively integrating elements from transnational discourse on education. In contrast, Ghana demonstrates how donor partnerships, regional frameworks, and national goals refract global discourses. As a non-OECD member state, Ghana is especially important because it shows that OECD-style rationalities travel and acquire force well beyond formal membership. Sweden exemplifies the embedding of long-standing OECD-aligned rationalities within a welfare state tradition, rearticulated through principles of neoliberal efficiency and competitiveness. Taken together, these three cases allow us to analyse how the digital citizen is produced through convergent yet uneven discursive formations.

Methodologically, this tripartite design challenges reductive North–South binaries by foregrounding entanglement, asymmetry, and hybridity in processes of discursive policy translation. Theoretically, it underscores that global agendas are not fixed scripts but contingent rationalities negotiated within specific socio-historical contexts. By doing so, the analysis unsettles the presumed universality of OECD-driven narratives, evidencing how their authority is rearticulated and contested in materially varied settings. Thus, Brazil, Ghana, and Sweden serve less as conventional comparative cases and more as contrasting sites of policy translation, offering a basis for rethinking the construction and transformation of education and technology policies. By centring the figure of the digital citizen, the article extends existing critiques of OECD influence beyond institutional reform and teacher subjectivity to the production of policy-relevant subject positions.

The study asks how the digital citizen is constructed as a governable subject in OECD discourse and how this discourse is translated into national policy documents in Brazil, Ghana, and Sweden. We argue that the digital citizen is not framed as a neutral user of technology, but as a productive, adaptable, and future-oriented subject optimised for participation in an unstable digital economy. What emerges is not a unified vision but a collection of differentiated yet convergent narratives that reframe education around the imperatives of technoscientific progress, employability, and digital innovation as they are displayed and understood in national contexts. Our contribution lies in tracing the uneven geographies of this discourse across materially and historically distinct contexts and in showing how it operates as a technology of governmentality that disciplines understandings of education, employability, and inclusion in the digital age. This work underscores the need to critically assess the promises of digital education reforms and problematise the political rationalities and economic interests they serve.

GOVERNMENTALITY, DIGITAL CAPITALISM, AND THE TRANSLATION OF EDUCATION POLICY

The notion of *governmentality* (Foucault, 2009) provides a central lens for analysing how education participates in the production of governed subjectivities. It highlights how pedagogical tools function as governing technologies, linking individuals to particular political rationalities. Rather than relying on coercion alone, governmentality operates through dispersed techniques that shape how individuals think, act, and regulate themselves. Foucault (2009) conceptualises this set of power techniques and rationalities as “governmentality,” referring to the interplay between institutions, practices, and knowledge that influence behaviour.

Reflecting on the role of the state in this process, Veiga-Neto and Lopes (2007) note that governmentality, initially linked to a wide range of social strategies such as religious practices and schooling, increasingly became consolidated within state apparatuses. This transformation intensified the role of the state in organising and regulating social life. Thus, power is mobilised through diffuse and normalising mechanisms that derive legitimacy from institutional authority, reinforcing the primacy of government over other forms of dominance. Furthermore, Veiga-Neto and Saraiva (2011) emphasise that governmentality helps explain why modern states adopted schools as privileged institutions for shaping conduct and subjectivity. Aligned with modern political rationality, schools produce “subject positions that are subordinated to a social whole, outside of which each subject does not even make sense” (p. 9). In this sense, subjectivity itself is an effect of governing practices.

To understand contemporary educational governance, it is necessary to situate these processes within what Schiller (2000) terms *digital capitalism*. This concept reflects the impact of technological change and the restructuring of capitalist accumulation through digital infrastructures and data practices. Fuchs (2021) argues that digital capitalism involves digital technologies, social media, algorithmic platforms, and big data analytics as means for extracting value and governing social life. In this context, communication is commodified, and users unknowingly engage in “digital labour.” These dynamics extend into education, shaping policy, pedagogical discourse, and curriculum priorities. Schiller connects digital capitalism to a broader neoliberal agenda that globalises market relations and prioritises economic competition over public services like education. He identifies the Internet and digital networks as key tools in this transformation, expanding market influence and infiltrating schools through policies framed as “innovation,” “efficiency,” and “empowerment.” Such framings are not neutral but reconfigure education as a site for producing economically viable subjects.

Recent works emphasise how digital capitalism is being intensified by artificial intelligence (AI). Roe and Perkins (2024) analyse generative AI in education, noting its potential to alter teacher-student dynamics, undermine agency, and reinforce inequalities. While these systems are frequently framed as tools of personalisation and efficiency, the authors highlight that they can also undermine autonomy, reinforce dependencies on algorithmic outputs, and deepen inequalities between those capable of critically navigating them and those who cannot. Nyaaba et al. (2024) discuss the geopolitical aspects of AI in education, arguing that it perpetuates 'digital neocolonialism' by marginalising local knowledge and promoting Western cultural assumptions. In this sense, AI extends the neoliberal restructuring of knowledge production identified by Schiller (2000). Rowsell (2025) examines literacy in the post-digital era, suggesting that the prevalence of AI-driven platforms influences learner engagement, creating both comfort and dependency while embedding education within digital capitalism. Taken together, these studies suggest that AI intensifies rather than disrupts existing capitalist logics, deepening commodification and precarious forms of educational labour.

Within this context, transnational policy discourses, particularly those articulated by the OECD, play a key role in linking digital technologies to economic development and in advancing digital capitalism within education. These discourses do not simply circulate unchanged; they are operationalised through processes of policy translation within national policy frameworks, where they contribute to the production of desirable subject positions aligned with these broader rationalities. To understand this dynamic, we articulate Foucault's concept of discourse with Ball et al.'s (2012) concept of policy translation. Inspired by Foucault (1982, 2009), Ball et al. (2012) reject the conception of policy as mere implementation, understood as the linear and faithful execution of normative texts. Instead, policy enactment is understood as a contingent process shaped by actors, contexts, and material conditions. By incorporating Ball's framework, we argue that policy translation constitutes the specific socio-historical mechanism through which global discursive rationalities are recontextualised into national policy spaces. Far from being a simple transfer, translation is a creative and contested practice of discursive adaptation, mediated by human and non-human actors (Latour, 2007), which allows abstract transnational dictates to ground themselves in local institutional realities. As such, it is inherently political, producing subjects, regulating conduct, and organising institutional life, while allowing room for resistance, resignification, and displacement (Foucault, 1982; Foucault et al., 2009).

Building on this framework, we extend the notion of translation beyond policy enactment in practice to encompass the movement of discourses across institutional levels. In this sense, policy translation refers to how discursive configurations in policy documents themselves are rearticulated. This allows us to analyse how discourse travels between institutional sites, such as between the OECD and the national bodies and institutions responsible for developing educational policies in Brazil, Ghana, and Sweden. Understood this way, translation is not external to discourse; rather, it is the actual practice through which a transnational discursive formation is expanded, maintained, and made functional across distinct legal and cultural contexts.

We understand discourse not as a simple grouping of signs, but as a set of statements originating from the same system of formation (Foucault, 2008a; Castro, 2019). The discursive convergence between the OECD and national education bodies reveals the operation of a transnational discursive formation, yet it is through continuous acts of policy translation that this formation establishes its regularities. Across different contexts, these actors mobilise homologous concepts such as "skills,"

“human capital,” and “performance” that stabilise a shared regime of meaning. This alignment manifests itself in standardised forms of enunciation such as statistical reports and large-scale examinations, which construct and delimit common objects, including the “quality of education” and the figure of the “student”. The concept of translation helps us grasp how these global objects are locally codified, showing that the OECD and national authorities do not passively share a common vocabulary, but actively translate their specific administrative demands into a networked formation that validates a transnational regime of truth.

In this arrangement, the OECD and national educational bodies should be understood as distinct yet interdependent instances of enunciation linked by a circular dynamic of translation. While the OECD consolidates its position as a global authority by synthesising expert knowledge and statistical analysis, this relationship is increasingly a two-way street. The OECD does not merely dictate guidelines; it also actively maps and harvests, and translates innovative local strategies into global “best practices”, provided they align with the organisation’s rationality. Once identified as “best practices,” these local pedagogical logics are refined and re-disseminated globally by the Organisation. Thus, educational discourse becomes a co-constructed space in which technical authority and local experimentation continually inform one another, reinforcing a shared framework of governance.

These institutions also function as sites of delimitation, holding the power to define and stabilise what counts as legitimate knowledge through the controlled circulation and appropriation of discourse (Foucault, 2008a; 2014). Crucially, this controlled circulation is operationalised as a policy translation regime. By publishing reports and policy documents, the OECD establishes authoritative definitions of educational success and failure, which are then translated into national policy texts. This concept of translation prevents us from viewing this process as a passive reception; instead, it highlights how national educational bodies selectively appropriate global discourses to legitimise domestic agendas, anchoring transnational power within local institutional micro-politics.

However, because translation is inherently unstable and contextual, the resulting discursive formation is never uniform. Foucault (2008a) observes that a single discursive formation can harbour divergent views and conflicting positions without compromising its unity. The notion of policy translation accounts for how this unity is lived out in practice: it explains why and how national contexts can appropriate, resist, or reconfigure global discourses, bending them to fit local priorities or material constraints. Thus, the OECD and national policy actors function as interconnected vectors of power, and policy translation is the very engine through which educational discourse circulates, is contested, and is historically stabilised across different contexts.

THE ANALYTICS OF POLICY TRANSLATION

The concepts outlined above guide our analysis of how curriculum and policy documents in Brazil, Ghana, and Sweden engage with global OECD discourses on digital competence, innovation, and the production of future-oriented citizens. Across these documents, the digital citizen emerges as a key discursive figure, constructed as a self-regulating, technologically competent, and economically productive subject positioned to participate in a global digital economy. Our analysis interrogates how this construction operates as both an educational objective and a governing rationality, while attending to the uneven ways it is translated across national contexts.

Adopting a Foucauldian-inspired discourse analysis (Veiga-Neto, 2003), we treat policy documents not as neutral representations, but as sites where power–knowledge relations are articulated and circulated. The analysis focuses on statements as historically situated enunciations that produce subject positions and delimit what can be said, thought, and enacted (Fischer, 2001). Rather than analysing internal textual coherence, we examine relations between statements and the forms of power they mobilise, asking what kinds of subjects are made possible and what governing rationalities are put into circulation (Veiga-Neto, 2003).

The selection of the eight documents analysed was guided by their programmatic significance at both national and transnational levels. We focused on texts involved in curriculum formation and digital policy development in Brazil, Ghana, and Sweden, alongside OECD documents that materialise and circulate its discourse, even when not directly prescriptive. Three criteria informed document selection: (1) recognised authority within curriculum or education governance; (2) explicit engagement with digital technologies, digital competence, or learner formation in relation to digital futures; (3) a programmatic or prescriptive function capable of shaping educational discourse. Importantly, OECD documents were selected not solely for their policy-directive role, but for their capacity to institutionalise and circulate authorised discourse. Similarly, national documents were chosen not for representativeness, but for their strategic role in shaping pedagogical and administrative orientations. Table 1 summarises the analysed corpus.

Table 1: Overview of analysed documents

Title of the document	Reference	Publisher	Content summary
21st Century Skills and Competences for New Millennium Learners in OECD Countries	Ananiadou & Claro (2009)	OECD	Analyses the 21st-century skills and abilities required for “New Millennium Learners” in OECD member countries focusing on how education systems must adapt to prepare students for the demands of the modern economy and society, addressing cognitive, social and digital literacy skills.
Inspired by Technology, Driven by Pedagogy: A Systemic Approach to Technology-Based School Innovations	OECD (2010)	OECD	Proposes a systemic approach to technology-based school innovations, focusing on the idea that these should be driven by pedagogy to improve the effectiveness of education systems.
National Curriculum Guidelines	Brazil (2013)	Brazil	Systematises the principles and general guidelines of Basic Education contained in the Constitution, the Law of Guidelines and Bases of Education, and other legal provisions, as well as guides the initial and continuing education courses for Basic Education professionals.
National Common Core Curriculum	Brazil (2017)	Brazil	Defines normatively the set of essential learnings for all students throughout the stages and modalities of Basic Education.

Ghana ICT in education policy	Ghana (2015)	Ghana	Outlines Ghana's national strategy to integrate ICT into education at all levels, focusing on infrastructure, capacity-building, digital content, and governance to improve teaching and learning outcomes.
National pre-tertiary education curriculum framework	Ghana (2018)	Ghana	Provides the guiding framework for curriculum reforms in Ghana's pre-tertiary education sector. Emphasizes values-based education, core competencies, and integration of ICT.
Läroplan för gymnasieskolan (Upper secondary school curriculum)	(Sweden) 2011	Sweden	The Swedish upper secondary school curriculum outlines objectives, grading criteria, and subject content, with digital literacy being a crucial competency.
Curriculum for the compulsory school, preschool class, and the recreation centre	(Sweden) 2024	Sweden	The plan lays out goals and guidelines for compulsory schooling in Sweden, which includes objectives for digital competence and technology use in early education.

The analysis proceeded through a structured, iterative process combining document analysis with inductive category construction. Following a Foucauldian logic, attention was directed to how statements produce subject positions and governing rationalities rather than merely reflecting policy intentions. The procedure unfolded in five stages. First, all documents were read in full to establish familiarity with their structure, language, and thematic orientation. Second, relevant excerpts were extracted based on their engagement with digital technologies, competence, and learner formation. A statement was defined as any policy excerpt articulating expectations, capacities, obligations, or desirable qualities attributed to learners in digitally mediated contexts. In total, 73 statements were identified across the corpus. Third, the extracted statements were organised into an analytical matrix and subjected to inductive coding. Initial codes captured recurring orientations such as digital skill, innovation, employability, adaptability, responsibility, and productivity. Fourth, codes were iteratively compared across documents and contexts to identify patterns of convergence and divergence. This comparative process enabled the reconstruction of discursive regularities, focusing on recurring objects (e.g., competence, innovation), key concepts, and subject positions (e.g., citizen), in line with discourse-analytic procedures outlined by Diaz-Bone (2006). Finally, these regularities were synthesised into three analytical figures: the tech-savvy digital citizen, the adaptable digital citizen, and the productive digital citizen. These figures are not fixed empirical categories but interpretive constructions that capture dominant modes of subject formation across the corpus.

The credibility of the analysis was strengthened through a collaborative and reflexive process among the authors. Documents were read independently and subsequently discussed in analytical meetings, where interpretations were compared, debated, and refined. In line with poststructural practices of critical policy analysis, the study adopted an interpretive strategy emphasising reflexivity, iterative comparison, and analytical coherence, and treats research methods as forms of ontological politics requiring rigorous self-problematization (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2025). Categories were retained only when they demonstrated recurrence across multiple documents and explanatory power across contexts, with

theoretical saturation indicated by the absence of substantively new patterns. It is important to note that only the Ghanaian documents were originally published in English. The Brazilian documents (Brazil, 2013, 2017) were published in Portuguese, and one Swedish document (Sweden, 2011) in Swedish. Unless otherwise indicated, all excerpts are the authors' translations, undertaken with attention to preserving semantic meaning and rhetorical force.

TRANSLATIONS OF THE DIGITAL CITIZEN IN EDUCATIONAL POLICIES

In documents intended to guide educational policy, characterisations of what citizens need to cope with the future go beyond listing technical competencies; they become a social role shaped by discourse. According to Foucault (2005, 2008a), this role does not arise from an inherent individual essence but rather serves as a defined, vacant position that individuals must occupy to validate their existence within the educational system. By establishing what Frau-Meigs et al. (2017) refer to as a consensus on the values, attitudes, and critical knowledge necessary for the digital age, official documents not only describe realities but also regulate the conditions and criteria individuals must meet to be recognised as capable and legitimate members of contemporary society.

In the process of subjectivation, elements known as the constituents of digital citizens, ranging from etiquette and law to security and digital commerce (Ribble, 2021), create a network of knowledge that helps define and guide individuals' behaviours and actions in cyberspace. As Foucault (2009) notes, power circulates through the individuals it has shaped. Consequently, by standardising concepts such as digital "fluency" or "ethics," documentary guidelines influence citizens through disciplinary practices. This positioning of the individual is often reduced to mere compliance with behaviour and security measures (Martin et al., 2019; Wang & Xing, 2018), functioning as a microphysics of power that aims to align individual conduct with the requirements of productivity and order in technological societies.

The digital citizen, as a subject position, involves a tension between subjugation and the "practices of the self" (Foucault, 2021). When frameworks such as Choi's (2016) introduce critical resistance and social justice as fundamental aspects of citizen education, they create opportunities for individuals to be more than passive recipients of norms. Instead, individuals can actively shape their subjectivities by exercising autonomy and questioning societal standards. Consequently, the digital citizen emerges at the intersection of domination techniques, which demand that individuals fulfil obligations and follow access protocols, and counter-conduct techniques, which enable individuals to position themselves in order to engage politically and ethically in democratic online spaces.

The distinction between digital citizen and digital citizen education (Vajen et al., 2023) highlights how educational discourse shapes this enunciative function. Digital citizen refers to the behaviours and attitudes expected in our online lives (Mossberger & Tolbert, 2021), while digital citizen education outlines the pedagogical vision aimed at fostering these traits. This educational framework establishes the implicit and historical rules that enable the expression and actions of student-citizens.

Ultimately, the digital citizen, as articulated in guiding documents, is not a fixed endpoint but rather a dynamic aspect of discourse. It seeks to balance active digital agency (Rapanta, 2023) with the need for well-being (Brites & Figueiras, 2023), thereby shaping a new way of existing in a world influenced by technological and social changes.

The concept of the digital citizen is prominent in OECD documents and reverberates in the national policies of the three countries studied. Although these nations are at different stages of engagement with the OECD, all recognise the importance of developing a technologically skilled population to enhance education and ensure economic prosperity. Across the corpus, digitally competent individuals are consistently framed as essential to navigating an unpredictable labour market and an evolving digital society. We have interpreted three articulations that contribute to fabricating the digital citizen: i) The tech-savvy digital citizen, ii) The adaptable digital citizen, and iii) The productive digital citizen.

While these articulations reflect a broadly shared global discourse, each country translates them into its own national policies, rearticulating them within distinct socio-historical, economic, and educational contexts. Consequently, important divergences emerge regarding what digital citizens should be, how they should express their skills and competencies, and the strategies by which they should be developed.

The tech-savvy digital citizen

The OECD positions governments as architects of the production of a subjectivity that, after analysing the documents that make up the empirical basis of this study, we call the “tech-savvy digital citizen”. The OECD documents operate through a logic of governmentality that aims to align individual conduct with the needs of “knowledge economies”. The formation of this citizen is framed not merely as technical but as moral and social, requiring education to instil “social values and attitudes” that shape how young people inhabit new spaces of social life. By suggesting that these skills become the “core” of what schools and teachers should focus on, and that they be rigorously “applied and assessed” by national standards, the OECD proposes a mechanism that captures technological and social learning and institutionalises it. This framing ensures that the future workforce is not only skilled but subjectively aligned with the reproduction of economic and social capital in networked environments.

Young people are already experiencing the new forms of socialisation and social capital acquisition that ICT developments are contributing to. Their education, both at school and at home, needs to provide them with the social values and attitudes as well as with the constructive experiences that will allow them to benefit from these opportunities and contribute actively to these new spaces of social life.

On the other hand, today’s labour force has to be equipped with the set of skills and competencies which are suited to the knowledge economies. Most of them are related to knowledge management, which includes processes related to information selection, acquisition, integration, analysis and sharing in socially networked environments. Not surprisingly, most, if not all, of these competencies, are either supported or enhanced by ICT. For many young people, schools are the only place where such competencies and skills can be learned.

Accordingly, governments should make an effort to properly identify and conceptualise the set of skills and competencies required so as to incorporate them into the educational standards that every student should be able reach by the end of compulsory schooling. Governments should realise that to be successful in this process there are two requirements to be met. On the one hand, participation of both economic and social institutions, ranging from companies to higher education institutions, is critical. On the other hand, all this process risks being irrelevant to schools unless this set of skills and competencies becomes the very core of what teachers and schools should care about, and this can only be done by incorporating them into the national

education standards that are enforced and assessed by governments. (Ananiadou & Claro, 2009, pp. 5-6)

The tech-savvy digital citizen is a subject who can apply acquired knowledge, skills and behaviours through the use of existing digital technology. The “savviness” in this context is a combination of social skills and technical skills. Therefore, competence in using, processing, and producing information with digital technologies needs to be developed through its curricularization as a core element. It is thus considered a legitimate contemporary competence, not just an additional skill for basic education, but also crucial for economic development now and in the future. In this context, digital technologies translate the urgency stressed by the OECD into educational intentions and suggested practices for cultivating competent digital citizens. They act as technologies of government that help align individual behaviour with the social and economic objectives of the state and of supranational organisations.

The concept of a tech-savvy digital citizen, as outlined in OECD documents, is translated into national frameworks in Brazil. When defining the skills to be developed in basic education regarding digital technologies, Brazilian educational documents create their own interpretation of a tech-savvy digital citizen. This individual can effectively combine digital technology with human attitudes, integrating technological skills with social, cultural, and ethical practices to generate knowledge and collective understanding. In Brazil, the idea of digital citizen is influenced by notions of authorship, leadership, and continuous learning, which are viewed as desirable forms of subjectivity. This approach encourages students to become active participants in the digital society through self-directed practices and personal development.

Understand, use, and create digital information and communication technologies in a critical, meaningful, reflective, and ethical way in various social practices (including school practices) to communicate, access, and disseminate information, produce knowledge, solve problems, and exercise leadership and authorship in personal and collective life. (National Curriculum Guidelines Brazil, 2013, p. 9)

Mobilise language practices in the digital universe, considering the technical, critical, creative, ethical, and aesthetic dimensions, to expand ways of producing meaning, engaging in authorial and collective practices, and learning how to learn in the fields of science, culture, work, information, and personal and collective life. (National Common Core Curriculum - Brazil, 2017, p. 490)

Brazilian curriculum documents emphasise the importance of cultivating a reflective, critical, ethical, creative, and authorial attitude toward digital technologies. They advocate for the development of learners who can produce meaning and engage in the collective construction of knowledge through dialogue with the world in a digital context. Being tech-savvy is understood as achieving a balance between developing both technical skills and critical, creative abilities, expanding “ways of producing meaning”. This approach aligns with a governmental perspective that views technology not only as a technical tool but also as a means of shaping individual subjectivities and cultural processes. The tech-savvy digital citizen in Brazil is someone who uses digital technologies ethically to create meaning and foster learning. However, this emphasis on authorship and criticality sits alongside an implicit expectation that such creativity be channelled toward productive participation in the digital economy. Thus, while

framed in humanistic terms, the digital citizen is subtly aligned with economic participation, blurring the boundary between critical citizen and productive subjectivity.

In Ghanaian documents, the tech-savvy digital citizen is conceived as a competitive, innovative, and collaborative global citizen. The focus on technical skills and teacher training, as well as the explicit reference to foreign institutions of excellence, positions the country to engage the international community, seeking partnerships and eager to establish new collaborations that lead to development. The notions that underpin this discursive configuration thus validate efficiency, innovation, and alignment with international standards as central elements of student subjectivation, while still gesturing toward the nurturing of adaptable and reflective learners.

ICT use should empower learners and develop them into digital citizens who are innovative designers, computational thinkers, and global collaborators who can communicate creatively and demonstrate key skills related to those areas. (National pre-tertiary education curriculum framework, Ghana, 2018, p. 79)

Improve capacity development for subject-based teaching and learning using ICT and facilitate faculty exchange schemes between Ghanaian tertiary institutions and foreign universities with world-class ICT faculties. (Ghana ICT in education policy, Ghana, 2015, p. 31)

Fabricating a tech-savvy digital citizen in Ghana means “empowering learners” with an attitude that boosts the economy and puts the country in the international spotlight. Ghana’s digital citizen discourse aligns with developmental goals that position information and Communication Technologies (ICT) as a means of economic transformation, reflecting a strategic alignment with global standards to address local priorities such as employability, innovation, and education reform. Initiatives such as “faculty exchange schemes between Ghanaian tertiary institutions and foreign universities with world-class ICT faculties” signal an effort to build institutional capacity and foster knowledge circulation to support local aspirations. The tech-savvy digital citizen of Ghana is a global collaborator who uses innovation and computational thinking to participate in local and international digital economies. Yet this empowerment is mediated through reliance on external expertise and international partnerships, revealing a tension between aspirations for local capacity-building and structural dependency on global knowledge systems. The digital citizen here oscillates between national development and external alignment, positioning the learner simultaneously as a local agent and a participant in externally defined technological futures.

In Sweden, educational policies position the use of digital technologies to emphasise a critical, socially responsible and innovative citizen. The tech-savvy digital citizen can understand the social impact of digitalisation, critically evaluate information, and act responsibly concerning technology. This construction is supported by the notion that digital literacy is a prerequisite for democratic participation and social and professional life in a digitalised society.

Schools should also contribute to developing students' digital literacy in an increasingly digitalised society. Digital literacy should help pupils understand how digitalisation affects the individual and the development of society. All pupils should be allowed to develop their ability to use digital technologies. They should also be given the opportunity to develop a critical and responsible approach to digital technology, to recognise opportunities and understand risks, and to be able to evaluate information. Through these skills and attitudes linked to digital literacy,

entrepreneurship, and innovation thinking, students develop important abilities in working, social life, and further studies. (Curriculum for the compulsory school, preschool class, and the recreation centre, Sweden, 2024, p. 3-4)

The Swedish production of the tech-savvy digital citizen encompasses “developing students’ digital literacy” to promote understanding of the many effects of digital technologies on personal life and society. This conceptualisation means “to recognise opportunities and understand risks” to develop “abilities important in working and social life and in further studies” in parallel with knowledge on entrepreneurship and innovation. The Swedish tech-savvy digital citizen is a self-regulated, autonomous individual who is literate and conscious of the risks and opportunities of using digital technologies. However, this democratic framing coexists with a strong emphasis on entrepreneurship and innovation, introducing a subtle tension between civic responsibility and market-oriented subject formation. Thus, the Swedish tech-savvy citizen is positioned at the intersection of democratic participation and neoliberal self-optimisation.

It is possible to say that educational policies in Brazil, Ghana, and Sweden translate the OECD’s discursive configurations on tech-savvy digital citizens, shaped by context-specific priorities and constraints. While all three recognise the centrality of digital literacy and social competencies, their interpretations differ. Brazil emphasises authorship, reflection, and ethics, promoting both individual and collective digital identity. Ghana focuses on development and global competitiveness, producing technically skilled citizens to address inequalities. Sweden prioritises self-regulation and entrepreneurship, fostering autonomous and participatory individuals. These differences do not merely reflect contextual variation; rather, they are evidence of how a shared global discourse is unevenly appropriated and rearticulated, producing distinct configurations of agency, responsibility, and economic participation across contexts.

The adaptable digital citizen

Another element that emerged across the analyses was the recurrence of enunciations arguing for an adaptable digital citizen as crucial at the intersection of digital technologies and education. The OECD reports examined highlight data that portrays ICT as an unavoidable technical and economic trend. Consequently, these reports advocate for significant reforms in educational systems to ensure they remain aligned with the rapidly changing job market. The documents construct an individual who must consistently adapt to technological changes to maintain their employability.

Today’s ICT-enabled global economy requires a much higher percentage of workers with advanced skills and learning capacities (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2004; Scheuermann and Pedró, 2009). Countries that do not develop workers with the skills and capacities to meet new labour market dynamics risk falling behind (Wagner, 2008). Throughout history, education systems have evolved in relation to changes in the means of production and the needs of labour markets for different distributions of skills and knowledge (Cole, 2010). The challenges that confront education leaders today are similarly propelled by economic and social shifts that demand more individuals achieve more advanced skills and learning capacities than ever before. (OECD, 2010, p. 106)

The OECD constructs adaptability as a central requirement of a digital citizen, linking economic survival to the population's cognitive flexibility. In the selected excerpt, the organisation uses rhetoric of urgency and the risk of “falling behind” to naturalise education as an appendage of market dynamics, considering that “education systems have evolved in relation to changes in the means of production and the needs of labour markets”. This call functions as a technology of government that promotes the subject as an entrepreneur of the self: one who must manage their own human capital (Foucault, 2008b) through lifelong learning. By emphasising that educational systems must evolve in symmetry with the means of production, the document legitimises a performative subjectivation, in which the development of higher cognitive skills aims at the permanent plasticity of the worker. Thus, the adaptable digital citizen is produced as a useful body, whose subjectivity must remain in a state of constant flux and updating to meet the incessant mutations of globalised capital, becoming essentially adaptable to any context. Adaptability is thus framed not as a contextual necessity, but as an individual obligation, shifting responsibility for systemic uncertainty onto the subject.

Brazilian documents highlight the urgent need for an education system that equips learners with the skills to navigate an uncertain, unpredictable future, now considered a permanent aspect of contemporary life. The emphasis on “learning to learn” fosters the development of adaptable digital citizens who are responsible for continuously updating their knowledge and skills, placing the burden of adaptability squarely on the individual, effectively individualising structural risk. Consequently, the ideal Brazilian adaptable digital citizen is depicted as an autonomous, lifelong learner.

An immediate consequence of the information society is that survival in this environment requires continuous learning throughout life. This new way of being requires that the student, in addition to acquiring certain information and developing skills to perform specific tasks, must learn to learn to continue learning. (National Curriculum Guidelines - Brazil, 2013, p. 163)

A considerable number of children and young people in school today will pursue professions that do not yet exist and will face problems of different kinds that may require different skills, a repertoire of experiences and practices, and the mastery of tools that the experience of this diversification can favour. (National Common Core Curriculum - Brazil, 2017, p. 69)

According to the documents, the information society not only requires continuous learning but also shapes the conditions of existence. To thrive and function effectively in this environment, individuals must learn how to learn, enabling them to continue their education in a competitive landscape shaped by digital capitalism. Therefore, students must be trained to be adaptable, able to modify their paths as new employment opportunities arise, and eager to acquire and produce knowledge to solve problems as they arise. In Brazilian terms, the adaptable digital citizen reflects a governmental translation of policies, in which the autonomous individual is equipped with a consistent set of skills for continuous learning and the ability to adapt to a wide range of opportunities in the workforce. In this framing, uncertainty is not addressed as a systemic condition but is reconfigured as a personal responsibility to remain employable, positioning adaptability as a moral obligation rather than a structural necessity.

The context in Ghana has led to discussions that, while rooted in the principles of lifelong learning and adaptability, feature an intriguing twist: technology is seen as a means of reducing inequalities and enhancing cognitive and creative skills. This perspective aligns with the discourse on the right to education and equitable development, even as it sits within the broader global conversation about “digital

fluency.” As a result, this produces a dual discourse that combines inclusion with economic instrumentalism. Ultimately, the adaptable Ghanaian digital citizen is characterised as a lifelong learner who is digitally fluent.

ICT is a first-rate tool in educational systems, but this statement is based upon scientific findings, particularly in training sciences, developmental psychology, knowledge, and education capability. Under the aegis of ICT, inequities can be reduced, and educational systems can promote the knowledge and skills of the learners, thereby encouraging and improving creativity, critical thinking, and learning how to learn. (National Pre-tertiary Education Curriculum Framework, Ghana, 2018, p. 74).

Learners from the pretertiary education system are expected to be fluent in Reading, wRiting, aRithmetic and cReativity, in addition to being developed into lifelong learners, who are digitally fluent. (National Pre-tertiary Education Curriculum Framework, Ghana, 2018, Foreword, p. iii)

In Ghanaian documents, digital technologies are positioned as essential tools in educational systems. Given their undeniable potential within digital capitalism, educational systems must harness digital technologies to enhance learners’ knowledge and skills. This involves promoting creativity, critical thinking, and self-directed learning by effectively using these tools. Consequently, Ghanaian educational documents emphasise that digital technologies should be integrated with the concept of lifelong learning. The Ghanaian adaptable digital citizen must be proficient in digital technologies to become a creative and critical lifelong learner. While digital technologies are framed as tools for reducing inequality, they are simultaneously positioned within a global competitiveness agenda that may reproduce those very inequalities. Adaptability in Ghana thus operates under a tension between equity and competitiveness, in which inclusion is pursued by aligning with global technological norms.

In Sweden, adaptability is closely tied to entrepreneurship and innovation. An adaptable individual is defined as being curious, creative, collaborative, and innovative. In this view, entrepreneurship is not merely a skill; it is considered a mode of subjectivity that encourages adaptability. This mindset enables individuals to develop a range of competencies and skills. The concept of “learning to learn” is understood as the ability to cultivate autonomy, initiative, and skills that enable students to continuously adapt to new contexts and challenges, thereby laying the foundation for lifelong learning. Thus, the Swedish idea of an adaptable digital citizen is that of an entrepreneurial individual who skillfully integrates digital technologies while navigating the challenges of the modern world. This framing redefines adaptability not only as responsiveness to change but as a proactive entrepreneurial disposition, aligning personal development with market logics. Adaptability becomes a mode of self-governance, where individuals are expected to continually reinvent themselves in response to shifting economic demands.

Through their studies, students will strengthen the foundations for lifelong learning. Changes in the world of work, digitalisation and technological developments, internationalisation and the complexity of environmental issues are placing new demands on people's knowledge and ways of working. Schools should stimulate pupils' creativity, curiosity and self-confidence, as well as their willingness to try out and put ideas into practice and to solve problems. All pupils should develop their ability to take initiative and responsibility and to work both independently and with others. Schools should help all pupils to develop skills and attitudes that promote entrepreneurship, enterprise and innovation thinking, which increase pupils' opportunities for

future employment, through entrepreneurship or employment. (Läroplan för Gymnasieskolan, Sweden, 2011, p. 3)

The document fabricates a learner who understands contemporary challenges and proactively seeks solutions. Formal education should foster lifelong learning, keeping learners informed about issues from digitalisation and digital capitalism. An adaptable learner possesses entrepreneurial and innovative skills, applying them responsibly and effectively both independently and collaboratively. The Swedish adaptable digital citizen develops competencies for lifelong learning and cultivates the necessary attitudes to tackle the challenges of a rapidly changing world.

Across the corpus, the adaptable digital citizen is a lifelong learner responding to ongoing technological, social, and economic changes. Despite varying socio-political contexts, all documents advocate for an education that fosters flexible, resilient, and productive individuals. The divergence lies in governance strategies: Brazil emphasises individual responsibility for continuous employability; Ghana prioritises ongoing learning to bridge socio-economic gaps and enhance scientific output; and Sweden promotes citizen leadership and entrepreneurship to create employment and income opportunities.

The productive digital citizen

The productive digital citizen emerges as a central organising figure linking education to the demands of the knowledge economy. The productive digital citizen is situated at the intersection between the demands of the knowledge economy and the restructuring of educational systems. From this perspective, the educational system is compelled to act as the vanguard of information societies, transcending mere functional literacy to promote the development of so-called “21st century skills”. Full integration into technological society is framed as a condition of economic survival rather than choice. The absence of such skills is interpreted as a new digital divide that marginalises individuals in the globalised labour market. Thus, education is called upon to shape individuals whose cognitive and technological capabilities align with the productivity and innovation requirements of contemporary capital.

Our increasingly technology-rich world raises new concerns for education while also engendering expectations that schools become the vanguard of knowledge societies. Firstly, technology can provide the necessary tools for improving the teaching and learning process, and for opening new opportunities and avenues. In particular, it can enhance the customisation of the learning process, adapting it to the particular needs of the student. Secondly, education has the role of preparing students for adult life, and, therefore, it must provide students with the skills necessary to join a society where technology-related competencies are becoming increasingly indispensable. The development of these competencies, which are part of the set of the so-called 21st century competencies, is increasingly becoming an integral part of the goals of compulsory education. Finally, in a knowledge economy driven by technology, people who do not acquire and master these competencies may suffer from a new form of the digital divide that may affect their capacity to fully integrate into the knowledge economy and society (OECD, 2010, p. 14).

The excerpt operates a discursive construction that establishes a truth about the educable individual: the productive digital citizen emerges not only as a pedagogical ideal, but also as an object of conduct governance. The OECD (2010) document functions as a normalising device, in which the ability

“to fully integrate” is conditioned on acquiring specific skills, thereby transforming subjectivity into human capital to be constantly optimised. Productivity, in this context, is discursively unfolded as a moral and economic duty; the individual is called upon to become economically viable through the self-management of their technical skills. The threat of exclusion, the “new form of the digital divide,” acts as a technique of power that incites the subject to conform to the performance metrics of the knowledge economy, consolidating the citizen’s identity as a flexible and perpetually productive worker. Productivity is thus moralised, transforming economic participation into a normative expectation of digital citizens.

In Brazil, educational discourse plays a vital role in shaping productive digital citizens by integrating technical, cultural, and scientific knowledge. The framework aims to cultivate individuals who can engage effectively in digital society by developing competencies such as using technological tools, applying computational thinking, fostering creativity, and solving complex problems. Additionally, it encourages reflective analysis of technology's risks and impacts. This approach guides individuals in skill development and lifelong learning, framing the digital citizen as someone productively integrated into the economy, influenced by innovation, efficiency, and individual responsibility.

Competencies and skills are defined in different areas, allowing students to:

- seek data and information critically across different media, including social media, analysing the advantages of the use and evolution of technology in contemporary society, as well as its potential risks;
- to appropriate the languages of digital culture, of the new literacies and multiliteracies to explore and produce content in various media, expanding the possibilities of access to science, technology, culture, and work;
- use various software tools and applications to understand and produce content in different media, simulate phenomena and processes from various fields of knowledge, and develop and explore different mathematical representation records; and
- use, propose, and/or implement solutions (processes and products) involving different technologies, to identify, analyse, model, and solve complex problems in various areas of everyday life, effectively exploring logical reasoning, computational thinking, investigative spirit, and creativity. (National Common Core Curriculum - Brazil, 2017, pp. 474-475)

In Brazilian documents, the productive individual is characterised as someone who effectively utilises digital media to engage with science, technology, and culture, thereby achieving economic viability by expanding access to work. This individual also critically evaluates information across various media forms and navigates responsibly in different digital contexts. The emphasis on digital texts in education aims to address challenges such as misinformation and foster information literacy. The Brazilian productive digital citizen is expected to critically engage with information while simultaneously producing value through digital competencies. This dual expectation reveals a tension between democratic inclusion and economic optimisation.

In Ghana, the documents surrounding ICT policy in education are focused and geared towards national economic development. The primary objective of the policy is to create a specialised “technical body,” referred to as the “geek corps,” to meet labour-market demand for a digitally skilled workforce. Digitalisation is viewed primarily as a strategy for economic integration and GDP growth. Within this framework, digitalisation acts as a mechanism of governance, aiming to transform education into a catalyst for economic growth and emphasising a clear connection between schooling and capital.

Within these reforms, it is also expected that the introduction of ICT into schools should cover teaching of ICT skills to all students, preparing students for the ICT professions and enhancing teaching and learning through ICTs. (ICT in Education Policy, Ghana, 2015, p.15)

This allows for talented and interested students to be tutored to high levels of technical competency as far as ICT is concerned so that they can in turn develop into a “talent pool” or “geek corps” to support the growing ICT workplace as a career option. (ICT in Education Policy, Ghana, 2015, p.19)

By giving students the skills to be successful in a 21st century workplace, they will more likely find jobs or start ICT-focused enterprises which can bring long term driven economic growth in Ghana. (ICT in Education Policy, Ghana, 2015, p.19)

The economically productive digital citizen in Ghana is equipped for ICT professions through improved teaching and learning methods that utilise ICTs. They belong to a group of “talented and interested students” who can be trained to become part of a “talent pool or geek corps” to support the growing ICT job market as a career choice. This perspective positions digital competence as a pathway to individual economic opportunity and national development, aligning with the broader goal of creating a technically skilled workforce to drive long-term economic growth. The productive digital citizen in Ghana is closely linked to ICT-specialised workers, characterised by technical skills, pragmatism, and a results-oriented mindset. These qualities not only facilitate entry into the labour market but also help sustain the country's economic development, with an emphasis on competitiveness and economic modernisation. However, the focus on specialised ICT labour risks narrowing educational goals to workforce production, potentially marginalising broader educational and civic aims. Productivity is thus tightly coupled with technical specialisation, reinforcing a utilitarian view of education.

Sweden presents formulations that attempt to balance social responsibility and economic development. The Swedish curriculum encourages students to understand the effects of digitalisation on society through an entrepreneurial mindset, combining technical skills with ethical training. Although the proposal has a humanistic element and addresses the risks associated with digitalisation, it remains rooted in the principles of competence and performance, promoting the notion of an autonomous, responsible, and productive individual.

Schools shall help pupils to develop an understanding of how digitalisation affects the individual and societal development. All pupils shall be given the opportunity to develop their ability to use digital technology. They shall also be given the opportunity to develop a critical and responsible approach to digital technology, so that they are able to recognise opportunities, understand risks and evaluate information. Education shall thus provide pupils with the conditions to develop digital competence and an approach that promotes entrepreneurship. (Curriculum for Compulsory School, Preschool Class and School-Age Educare, Sweden, 2024, p. 8)

Sweden's productive digital citizen understands how digitalisation impacts both individual and societal development. They are fluent and critical in their use of digital technologies, enabling them to recognise opportunities, understand risks, and evaluate information effectively. The overarching goal is to cultivate individuals who develop digital competence and foster an entrepreneurial mindset, which is a central theme in Swedish education. This approach reflects a specific critical perspective, shaped by digital capitalism. The Swedish productive digital citizen is someone capable of acting responsibly within a democratic society, understanding the social implications of technology, and motivated to drive economic innovation. Thus, they must also be able to identify opportunities and act innovatively within

the framework of digital capitalist entrepreneurship, producing a critical digital citizen subjectivity with market-oriented preparation. Yet this balance is unstable, as democratic values are increasingly articulated through the language of competence, performance, and entrepreneurship. The productive citizen is therefore both a democratic subject and an economic actor, revealing the entanglement of civic and market rationalities.

The analysis reveals differentiated yet convergent constructions of the productive digital citizen across contexts. The OECD emphasises advanced cognitive skills for both the labour market and democracy, while Brazil foregrounds critical thinking and innovation for democratic inclusion, science, and work. In Ghana, the concept centres on training ICT workers, emphasising technical skills and pragmatism to enhance economic competitiveness. Sweden combines democratic commitment with economic innovation, integrating social responsibility with market-oriented entrepreneurship. Each country thus emphasises different dimensions of the productive digital citizen, ranging from democracy to technical specialisation and from innovation to critical engagement. These enunciations shape not only perceptions of economic productivity but also the ideal traits, such as competence, adaptability, and creativity, associated with contemporary digital citizen subjectivity. While the OECD universalises productivity as a condition of participation in the knowledge economy, national translations selectively rearticulate this logic through democracy (Sweden), development (Ghana), and critical-creative engagement (Brazil). However, across all contexts, productivity remains the underlying organising principle through which the digital citizen is normalised. From a Foucauldian perspective, these policies operate as technologies of governmentality, transforming education into a site where subjects are shaped to align with the imperatives of digital capitalism.

CONCLUSION

The analysis conducted in this study indicates that the notion of the digital citizen cannot be viewed as a neutral or universal figure. Instead, it emerges from complex processes that involve translating transnational discourses into specific national contexts. While the OECD plays a central role in creating and sharing discourses on digital competence, innovation, and employability, this investigation shows that Brazil, Ghana, and Sweden do not simply adopt these guidelines. Rather, they actively recontextualise them based on their unique historical backgrounds, political priorities, and development agendas. This study advances scholarship by demonstrating that the notion of digital citizen is not simply transferred across contexts but actively reconfigured through processes of discursive policy translation.

The findings highlight three recurring dimensions: the tech-savvy digital citizen, the adaptable digital citizen, and the productive digital citizen. While these dimensions share a common vocabulary, they take on specific nuances in each country's documents. In Brazil, the digital citizen emphasises authorship, ethics, and critical reflection, resulting in an approach shaped by cultural and aesthetic orientations. In Ghana, the focus is on national development and leadership, which shape individuals into technically skilled and collaborative citizens who aim to integrate into the global market and address inequalities. In Sweden, the emphasis lies on the interplay between social responsibility, critical thinking, and entrepreneurship, fostering individuals who are both autonomous and innovative.

These findings indicate that digital education policies function as technologies of governance in the Foucauldian sense, shaping individuals to align with the rationalities of digital capitalism. At the

same time, the diversity of national translations shows that global discourses do not travel through simple transfer, but through processes of appropriation, negotiation, and re-signification. Schools, therefore, emerge not only as sites of learning but as sites of subject formation where local priorities and global agendas intersect.

These translations emphasise that OECD discourses derive their authority from their capacity to circulate, adapt, and gain legitimacy across local policy contexts. By embedding themselves in the language of inevitability, automation, innovation, and competitiveness, these discourses define what constitutes legitimate knowledge and prescribe the type of education citizens should receive. This raises an important political question: who benefits from the creation of the “digital citizen”? Our findings suggest that discourses emphasising adaptability, entrepreneurship, and productivity primarily serve the interests of global markets and state competitiveness, often at the expense of alternative visions of citizen focused on solidarity, equity, and democratic transformation.

From a theoretical and methodological standpoint, this study challenges the tendency to universalise global educational agendas and demonstrates the importance of contrastive, context-sensitive analysis. By shifting the focus to how discourses on digital citizen are interpreted across contexts, the study offers an opportunity to rethink the development of public policies. These policies should acknowledge the diversity of contexts and challenge the constraints imposed by neoliberal rationality.

Our findings highlight the need for more than a mere descriptive acknowledgement of diversity; they call for the repoliticization of digital education policy. We must not only examine how global discourses are translated but also consider how they can be resisted, reimagined, or displaced. Therefore, “rethinking” public policy in this area should not simply involve refining existing narratives of employability and competitiveness. Instead, we should critique the neoliberal rationality that frames these narratives as inevitable. In an age where digitalisation is framed as inevitable, education must be reclaimed as a space for contesting the futures it seeks to normalise. Digital citizen, therefore, should not be understood as a neutral educational goal, but as a contested terrain through which the future of education, labour, and democracy is actively governed.

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DECLARATION OF AI AND AI-ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS

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DECLARATION ON DATA AVAILABILITY

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The author(s) declare that all research data and supporting materials analysed in this study are fully available, without restrictions, in their entirety prior to publication. As this research consists of a documentary analysis of public policies, educational frameworks, and international guidelines, all analysed content is in the public domain and can be accessed directly through their respective official URLs and Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs) listed below:

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5. Ghana ICT in education policy — <https://policyvault.africa/wp-content/uploads/policy/GHA200.pdf>
6. National pre-tertiary education curriculum framework — <https://nacca.gov.gh/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/National-Pre-tertiary-Education-Curriculum-Framework-final.pdf>
7. Läroplan för gymnasieskolan — https://www.skolverket.se/undervisning/gymnasieskolan/laroplan-gy11-for-gymnasieskolan/curriculums/GY2011?schoolType=GY&typeOfSyllabus=COURSE_SYLLABUS&tim espan=LATEST
8. Curriculum for the compulsory school, preschool class, and the recreation centre — <https://www.skolverket.se/download/18.11f7c7851925054d8c645/1727947772375/pdf13128.pdf>

AUTHORSHIP STATEMENT

CONTRIBUIÇÃO DE AUTORIA

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding this article.

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