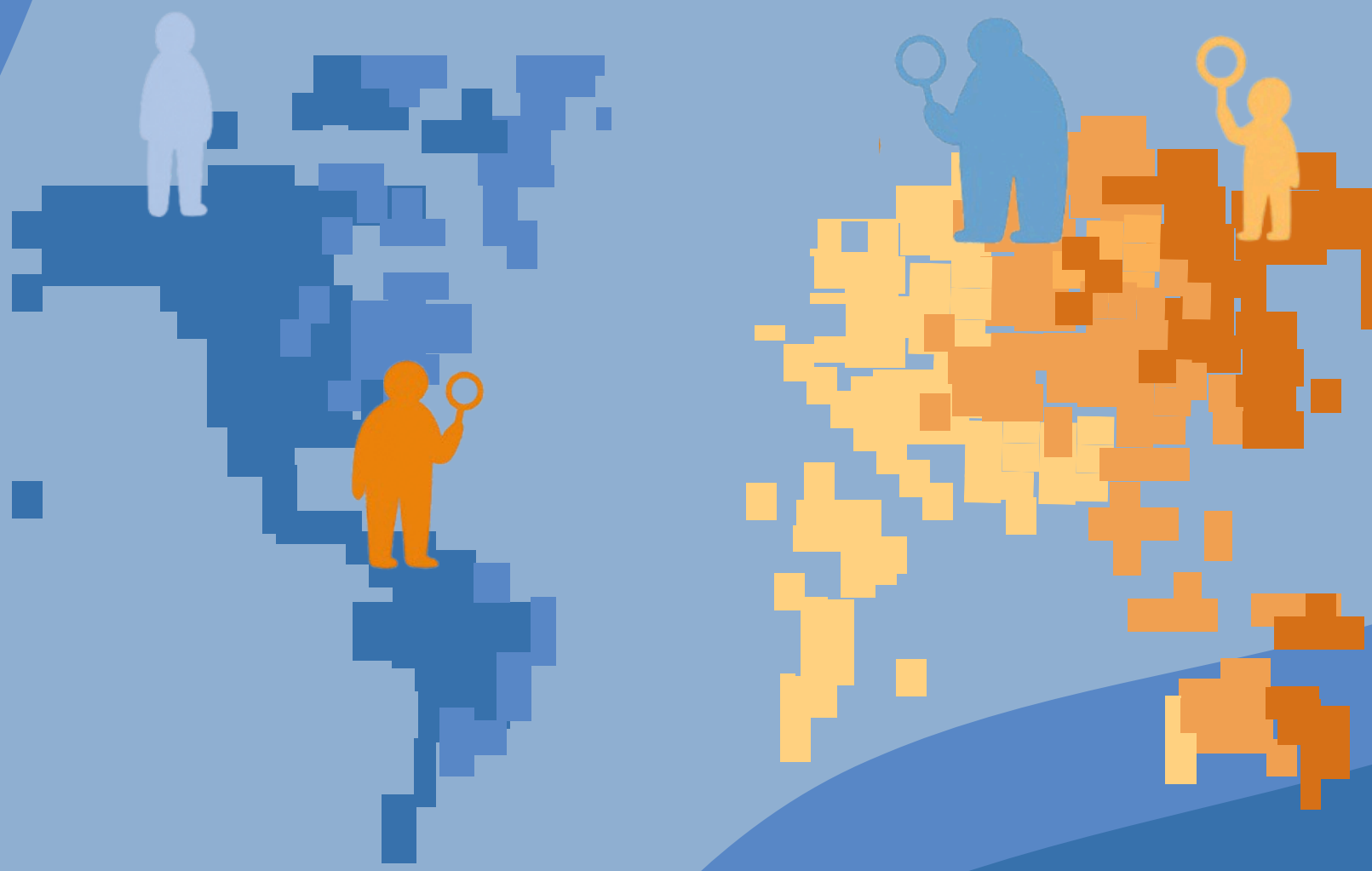
Technical report

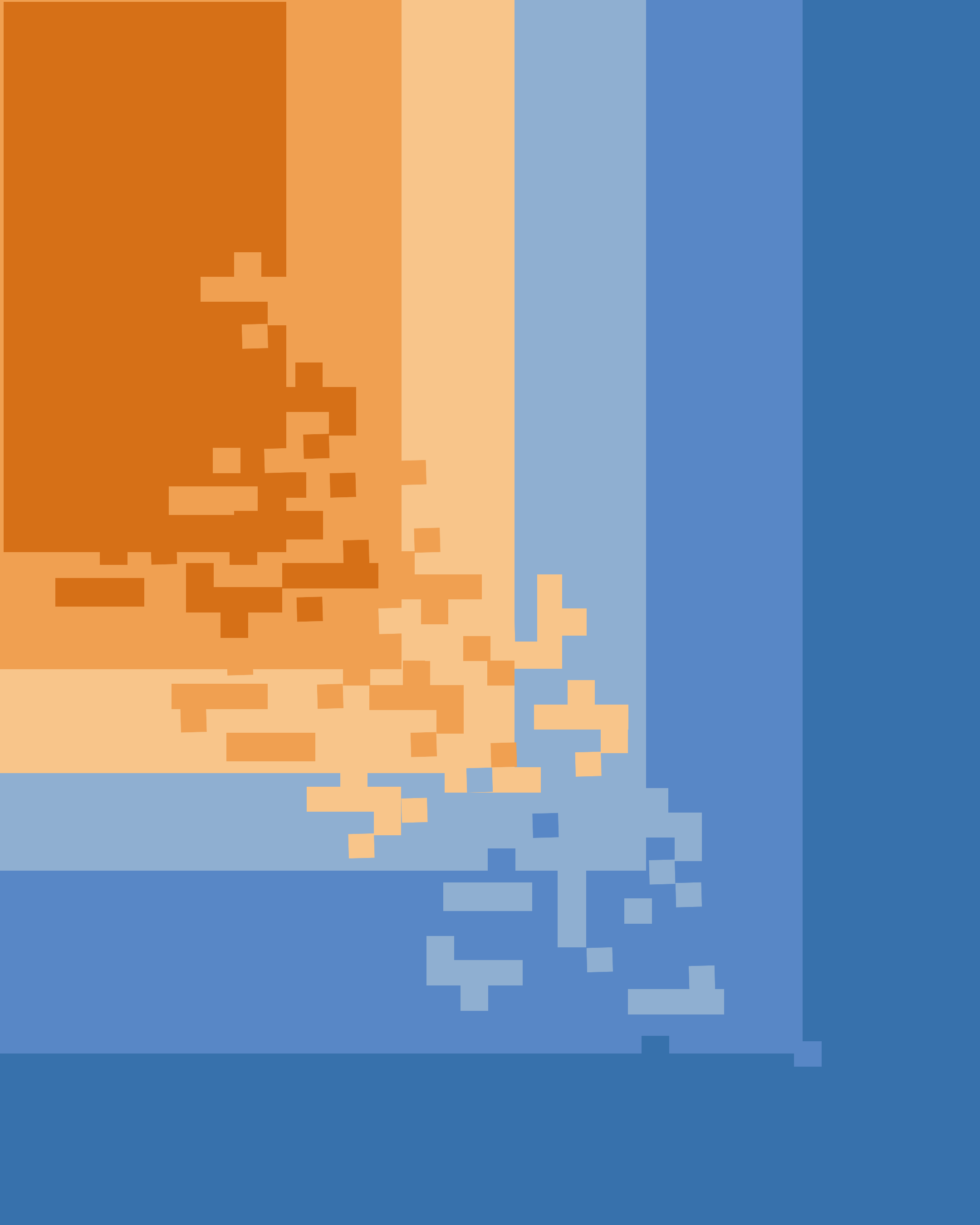
Power-Up:
Values at the Heart of Digital Citizenship



BRILLIANT STARS
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

dexterity club

Power UP



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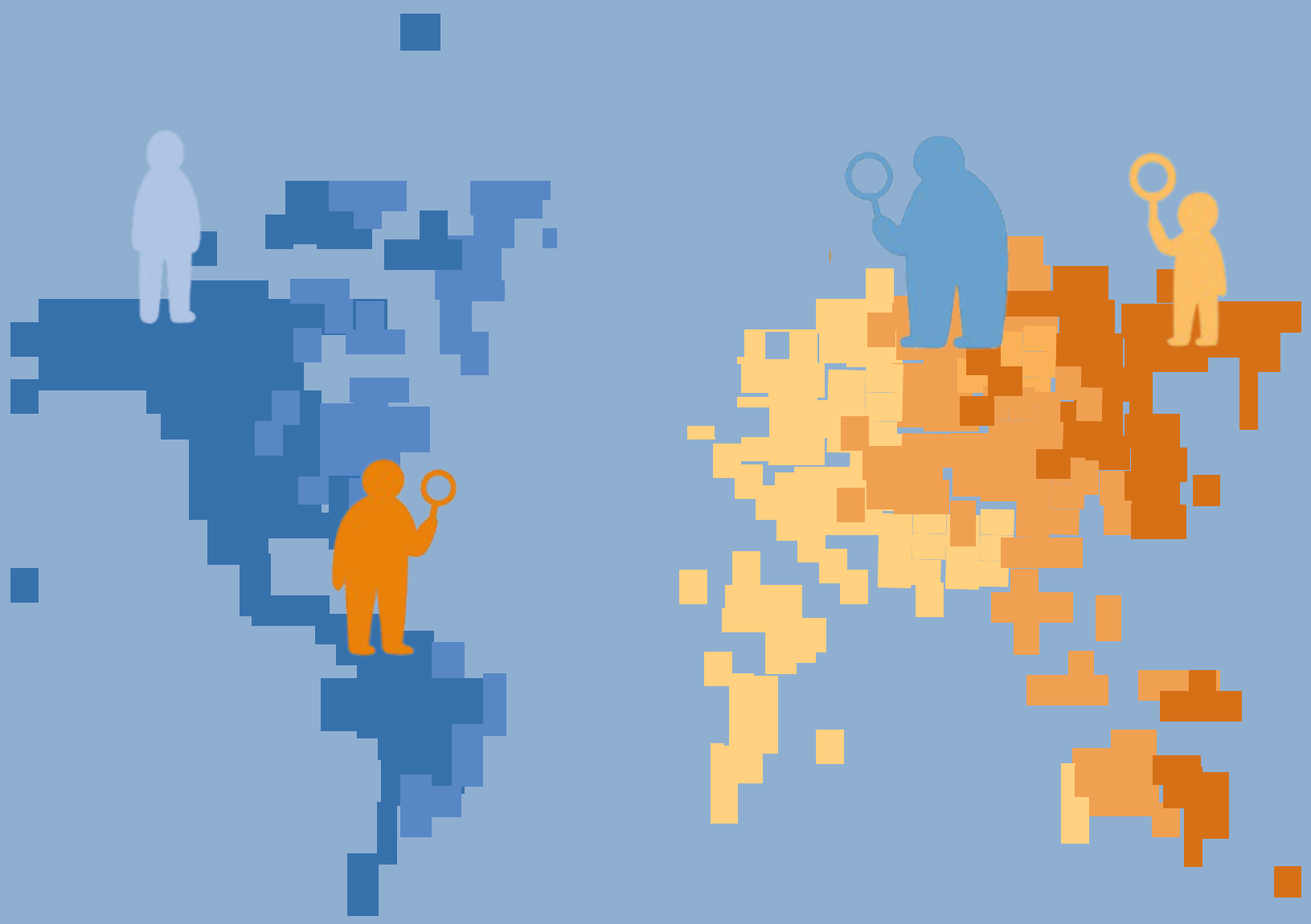
Development of the Power-Up Framework

Purpose:

This technical guide documents the development process, methodological decisions, and design rationale behind the Power-Up Framework and its associated educational resources. It is intended for researchers, practitioners, and stakeholders who wish to understand the technical foundations of the project or adapt its methods for similar initiatives.

1. Introduction

The Power-Up project was designed to bridge significant gaps in digital citizenship education by embedding ethical, civic, and relational dimensions into digital competencies. This technical guide details the methodological underpinnings and development process of the Power-Up Framework and its associated educational resources.



2. Context and Rationale

Over the past decade, there has been increasing recognition that digital literacy must extend beyond technical proficiency to encompass the broader competencies required for meaningful and ethical participation in a digitally connected society. Reports by UNESCO (2024) and the European Commission's DigComp 2.2 framework (Vuorikari et al., 2022) underscore the importance of nurturing digital competencies that promote not only individual agency but also collective well-being and civic engagement. Despite these insights, many current educational approaches remain fragmented or overly reactive, focusing on protecting young people from harm rather than empowering them to act ethically and confidently in digital spaces. This imbalance leaves significant gaps, particularly in addressing issues of identity, values, and community in online contexts.

Furthermore, although digital literacy and citizenship have increasingly been integrated into formal curricula in countries such as the Netherlands (Grgurina & Tolboom, 2024), educators often report a lack of practical, classroom-ready resources and training to effectively implement these topics. Power-Up responds to these challenges by placing values and character development at the heart of digital citizenship education, offering an innovative framework and resources designed to support educators, caregivers, and communities in fostering thoughtful, ethical digital engagement.

Grgurina, N., & Tolboom, J. (2024). K-8 Digital Literacy Curriculum in the Netherlands. Informatics in Schools. Innovative Approaches to Computer Science Teaching and Learning, 30–43. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-73474-8_3

UNESCO. (2024). Global citizenship education in a digital age: Teacher guidelines. UNESCO. https://doi.org/10.54675/BBSJ1884

Vuorikari, R., Kluzer, S., & Punie, Y. (2022). DigComp 2.2 - the Digital Competence Framework for Citizens: With new examples of knowledge, skills and attitudes. Publications Office of the European Union. https://doi.org/10.2760/115376

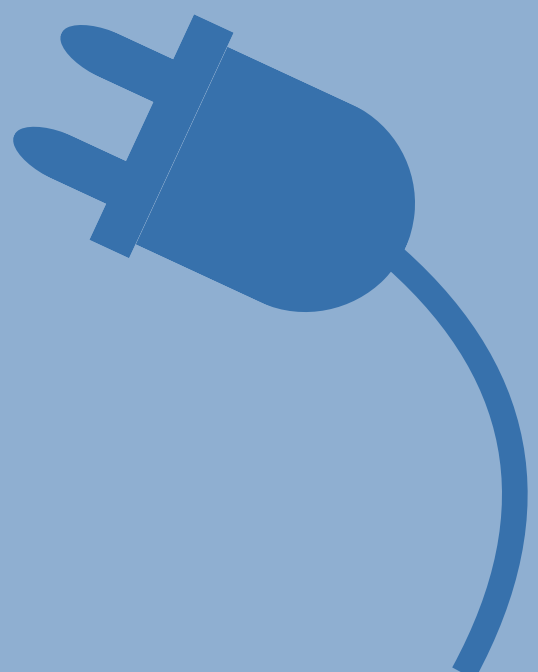
3. Guiding Questions

Power-Up was structured around two central questions, which guided both the development of the conceptual framework and the creation of practical resources:

RQ1: What competencies are needed for individuals and societies to flourish in a digitally connected world?

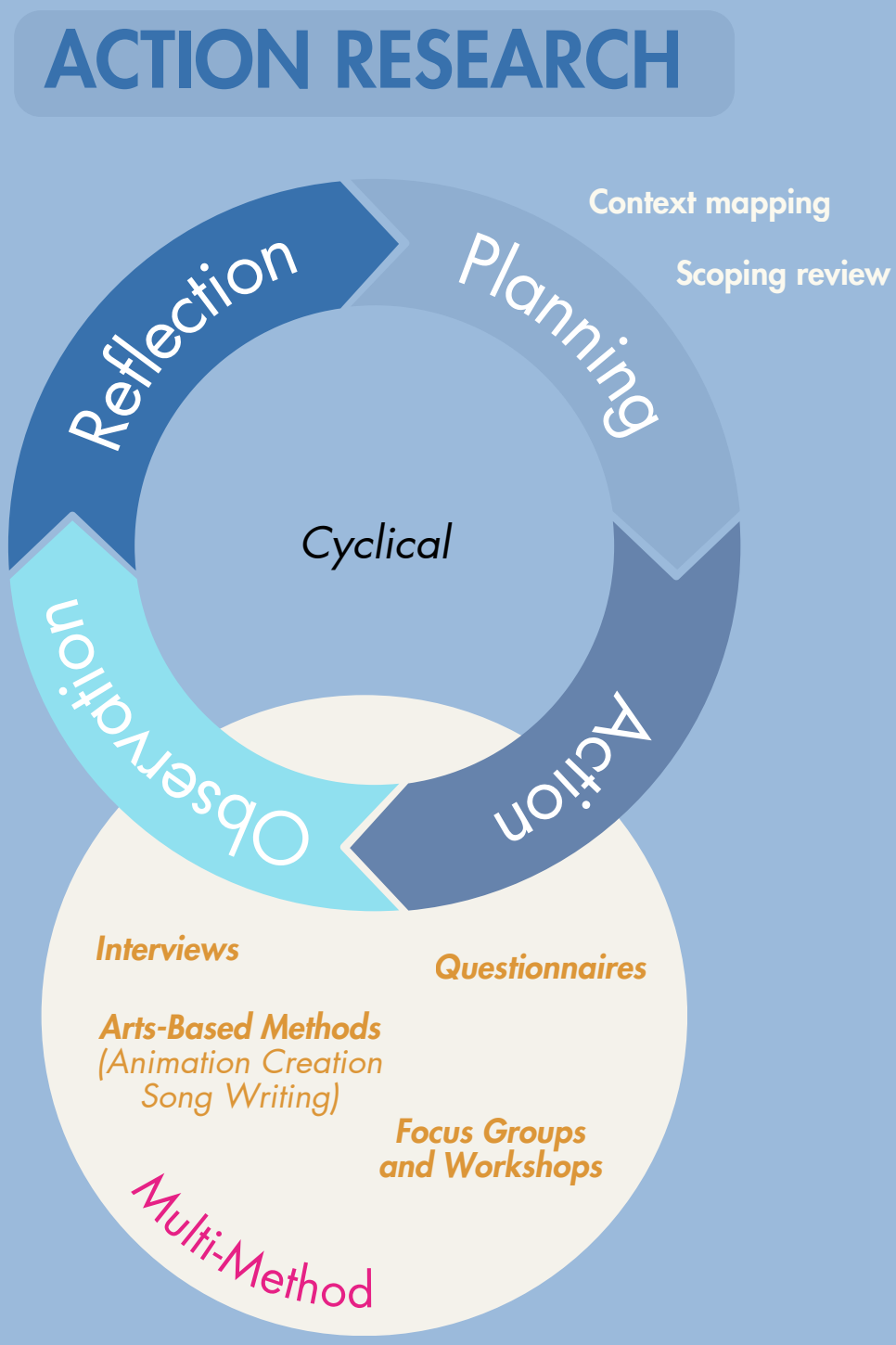
RQ2: What practical resources can support cultivating these competencies?

These questions reflect the project's ambition to move beyond simply defining skills to exploring how they can be meaningfully embedded into everyday educational practice.



4. Methodological Approach

4.1 Overall Design



The development of the Power-Up Framework was grounded in a practice-based research methodology that combined rigorous academic inquiry with participatory, co-creative processes. The methodological approach was shaped by several core principles:

- Action Research: Power-Up followed iterative cycles of inquiry, reflection, and refinement, ensuring that each stage of development was informed by real-world practice and stakeholder feedback. This process was carried out using:
    - Multi-Method: A blend of qualitative research methods was used, including interviews, focus groups, workshops, and arts-based approaches, allowing for a rich and nuanced understanding of stakeholder perspectives.
    - Arts-Based Methods: Creative processes such as animations, music, and storytelling were employed to surface insights that traditional research methods might overlook, providing an authentic window into young people's experiences and concerns.
- Participatory Co-Creation: The project was fundamentally collaborative, involving educators, students, parents, and researchers as equal partners in designing both the framework and the educational resources.

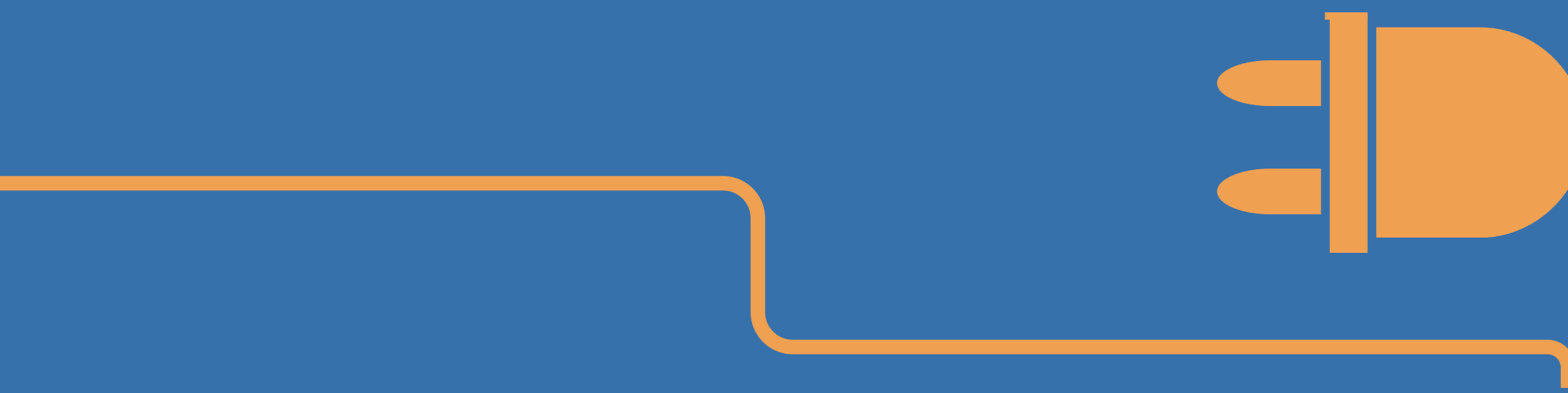
The collaborative approach ensured that outputs were rooted in lived experience and practical application.

4.2 Literature Review

The initial phase of the project involved an extensive review of existing literature and frameworks in the fields of digital citizenship, global citizenship, ethics education, and character development. Key documents examined included:

- The European Commission's DigComp 2.2 Framework (Vuorikari et al., 2022)
- UNESCO's Digital Citizenship Education Guidelines (UNESCO, 2024)
- The DQ Institute's Digital Intelligence Framework
- The OECD Learning Compass 2030
- Scholarly literature on global citizenship, critical digital literacy, participatory pedagogy, and ethical education

This review highlighted the strengths and limitations of existing frameworks, revealing that while many offer detailed definitions of technical competencies, they often fall short in operationalising ethical and relational dimensions in practical, engaging ways for diverse educational contexts. These findings provided the conceptual foundation for Power-Up's focus on values and relational ethics as central elements of digital citizenship.



4.3 Stakeholder Engagement and Data Collection

Power-Up was developed from within the partner organisations, emerging organically through their shared work and values. Its creation was embedded in the everyday practices of both institutions, making it deeply participatory. Educators, students, parents, and researchers from Slovakia and the Netherlands were active collaborators at every stage, ensuring that the framework and resources reflected diverse perspectives and were grounded in practical realities.

Stakeholder engagement was an integral part of the Power-Up project. The engagement process included semi-structured interviews that explored participants' experiences, challenges, and aspirations related to digital life and digital education. Focus groups were convened to discuss emerging themes and validate preliminary ideas, fostering dialogue among educators, parents, and young people. Workshops and collaborative working groups provided opportunities for participants to co-design and critique elements of the framework, ensuring that every aspect of Power-Up was shaped by authentic stakeholder input.

An especially distinctive feature of the project was the integration of arts-based methods. Students participated in creating animations depicting real-life digital dilemmas, composed music exploring emotional and ethical dimensions of online experiences, and engaged in storytelling activities that illuminated the narratives shaping their digital identities. These creative approaches surfaced nuanced insights, highlighting areas where young people felt uncertain, inspired, or conflicted about their digital lives.

4.4 Iterative Development Process

The Power-Up framework evolved through multiple cycles of design, testing, and refinement. Initial drafts of the framework were developed based on findings from the literature review and early stakeholder consultations. These drafts were then piloted in classrooms and workshops, where educators, students, and parents provided feedback on clarity, relevance, and usability.

Each round of piloting led to further adjustments, including simplifying language to ensure accessibility for younger learners, refining examples and case studies to reflect real-life contexts, and adapting activities to be suitable for varying levels of digital familiarity and cognitive development. This cyclical, iterative process ensured that the final framework and resources were both academically robust and practically grounded.

5. Framework Structure and Principles

The Power-Up Framework is structured around four interconnected Key Areas:

1. Cultivating discernment in the digital world.
2. Strengthening responsible engagement with digital technology.
3. Building meaningful connections: nurturing relationships and communities.
4. Shaping our digital presence with integrity.

Each Key Area encompasses personal, relational, and civic dimensions and is supported by specific learning objectives, prompts for discussion, and suggested activities. The framework is designed to be used flexibly, either as a structured programme that progresses through themes in a spiral fashion or as standalone resources that educators and parents can deploy based on immediate needs and context.

A key innovation of Power-Up is its **capacity-based approach**, which distinguishes it from many existing frameworks that are rigidly age-banded. While age can offer useful developmental guidance, Power-Up recognises that readiness for engaging with complex digital and ethical topics varies greatly among individuals. The framework thus encourages educators and caregivers to consider learners' developmental stage, maturity, and lived experiences rather than relying solely on chronological age.

This capacity-driven model aligns with the project's philosophical foundation in the capabilities approach, emphasising individuals' freedom to pursue lives they value. Power-Up also draws on relational ethic, which centres the community and collective well-being as fundamental aspects of personal development.

6. Resource Development

Building on the framework, Power-Up developed a suite of educational materials designed to translate theoretical insights into practical tools for teaching and learning. Central among these are the Power-Up flashcards, which present scenarios, questions, and prompts to facilitate meaningful discussions around digital citizenship themes. The flashcards are designed to encourage critical thinking, empathy, and collaborative problem-solving and can be used flexibly either as part of a structured programme or for ad hoc conversations.

In addition to the flashcards, the project produced animations and music projects created by students. These creative outputs provide engaging entry points for exploring digital citizenship themes, allowing young people to see their own experiences and voices reflected in the materials. For younger children, storytelling resources were developed to introduce core values and ethical concepts in age-appropriate and accessible ways.

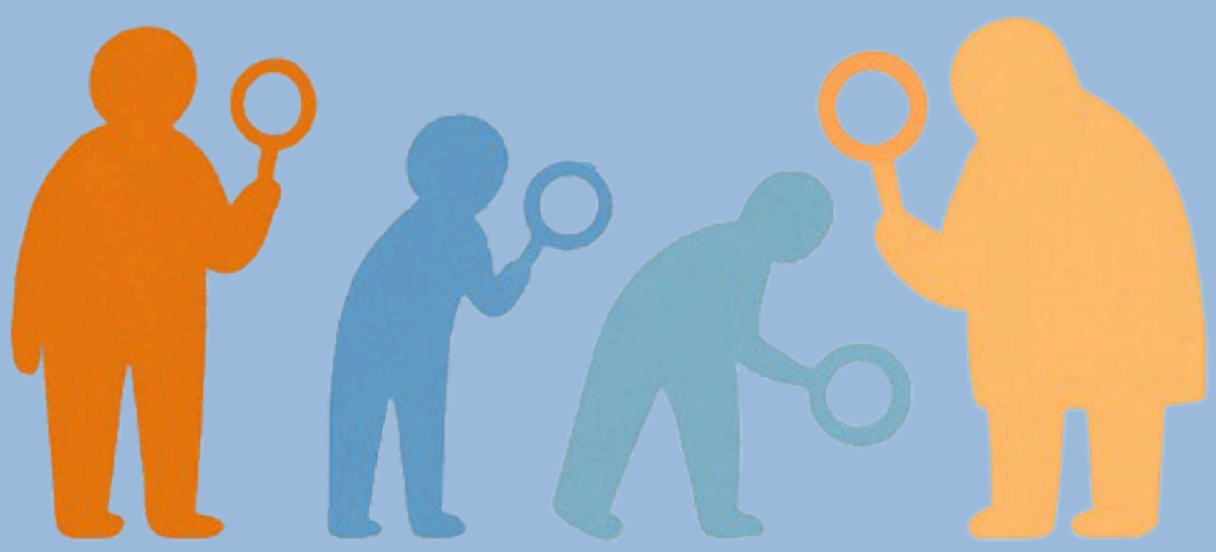
All resources were tested in real educational settings, with feedback gathered on their clarity, engagement level, and adaptability across different contexts. Teachers reported finding the materials valuable for deepening conversations with students about online behaviour, ethics, and community, while parents highlighted the resources as helpful guides for navigating digital issues at home.

7. Key Insights and Lessons Learned

Three critical insights emerged from the Power-Up project. First, the collaboration between institutions with complementary expertise, in this case, a school deeply experienced in global citizenship and values education, and an organisation focused on digital literacy and innovation, proved to be a powerful driver of pedagogical innovation. While bridging disciplinary perspectives required time and intentional dialogue, the result was a richer and more integrated framework.

Second, the active involvement of students, educators, and caregivers throughout the process ensured that the framework and resources were not merely theoretical but deeply attuned to the practical realities and concerns of those most affected by digital citizenship issues. This participatory approach underscored the value of co-creation in educational innovation.

Finally, the project reinforced the understanding that digital citizenship is not solely an individual endeavour but a communal responsibility. Thriving in digital spaces requires supportive relationships, shared understanding, and collective action to build ethical and just digital environments. Power-Up's approach places relationships and community at the heart of digital education, recognising that it is through connection and shared purpose that individuals find the strength and clarity to navigate digital complexities.



Acknowledgements

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