

DIGITAL EDUCATION AND COMPREHENSIVE PROTECTION: CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING LAW NO. 15,211/2025 IN THE SCHOOL CONTEXT

EDUCAÇÃO DIGITAL E PROTEÇÃO INTEGRAL: DESAFIOS NA
IMPLEMENTAÇÃO DA LEI Nº 15.211/2025 NO CONTEXTO ESCOLAR

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ABSTRACT

The increasing integration of digital technologies into the daily lives of children and adolescents has profoundly transformed the ways they learn, communicate, socialize, and construct their identities. Alongside the opportunities fostered by digital culture, significant challenges have emerged, including early exposure to social media, cyberbullying, unlawful processing of personal data, misinformation, hate speech, and various forms of violence perpetrated in digital environments. In response to these challenges, Law No. 15,211/2025—commonly referred to as the Digital Child and Adolescent Statute (Digital ECA)—was enacted to update the Brazilian Child and Adolescent Statute by strengthening the principle of comprehensive protection in digital environments.

This article examines the contributions of this legislation to contemporary school practices, arguing that digital education constitutes a fundamental instrument for fostering digital citizenship, critical autonomy, and the comprehensive protection of children and adolescents. The study adopts a qualitative approach based on bibliographic and documentary research, drawing upon the 1988 Federal Constitution, the Brazilian Child and Adolescent Statute, Law No. 15,211/2025, the National Common Core Curriculum (BNCC), and theoretical contributions from the fields of Education and Digital Culture.

The findings indicate that the effectiveness of the new legal framework depends upon the incorporation of digital education into pedagogical practice, recognizing schools as privileged spaces for cultivating critical thinking, digital ethics, and active citizenship in a society increasingly shaped by digital technologies.

Keywords: Digital Citizenship; Digital Child and Adolescent Statute (Digital ECA); Digital Education; Comprehensive Protection.

RESUMO

A crescente integração de tecnologias digitais ao cotidiano de crianças e adolescentes transformou profundamente as formas como elas aprendem, comunicam-se, socializam-se e constroem suas identidades. Paralelamente às oportunidades proporcionadas pela cultura digital, surgiram desafios significativos, incluindo a exposição precoce às redes sociais, o *cyberbullying*, o tratamento ilícito de dados pessoais, a desinformação, o discurso de ódio e diversas formas de violência perpetradas em ambientes digitais. Em resposta a esses desafios, foi promulgada a Lei nº 15.211/2025 — comumente denominada Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente Digital (ECA Digital) —, com o objetivo de atualizar o Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente (ECA) brasileiro e reforçar o princípio da proteção integral nos ambientes digitais.

Este artigo analisa as contribuições dessa legislação para as práticas escolares contemporâneas, defendendo que a educação digital constitui um instrumento fundamental para promover a cidadania digital, a autonomia crítica e a proteção integral de crianças e adolescentes. O estudo adota uma abordagem qualitativa baseada em pesquisa bibliográfica e documental, fundamentando-se na Constituição Federal de 1988, no Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente, na Lei nº 15.211/2025, na Base Nacional Comum Curricular (BNCC) e em contribuições teóricas das áreas de Educação e Cultura Digital.

Os resultados indicam que a eficácia do novo marco legal depende da incorporação da educação digital à prática pedagógica, reconhecendo as escolas como espaços privilegiados para o cultivo do pensamento crítico, da ética digital e da cidadania ativa em uma sociedade cada vez mais moldada pelas tecnologias digitais.

Palavras-chave: Cidadania Digital; Estatuto da Criança e do

Adolescente Digital (ECA Digital); Educação Digital; Proteção Integral.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of digital technologies has profoundly transformed the ways in which children and adolescents learn, communicate, establish social relationships, and construct their identities. Increasingly early access to the internet, mobile devices, and digital platforms has broadened opportunities for learning, social participation, and knowledge production while simultaneously exposing young people to new risks associated with excessive disclosure of personal data, online violence, the dissemination of misinformation, algorithmic manipulation, and multiple forms of exploitation in digital environments.

Over the past decades, virtual environments have evolved from being merely complementary spaces of everyday life into permanent dimensions of social interaction. Children and adolescents have grown up immersed in a digital reality characterized by the continuous circulation of information, constant connectivity, and the widespread influence of digital platforms capable of shaping behaviors, consumption patterns, opinions, and processes of socialization. Within this context, the principle of Comprehensive Protection, enshrined in Article 227 of the 1988 Federal Constitution and subsequently regulated by Law No. 8,069/1990, which established the Brazilian Child and Adolescent Statute (Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente – ECA), requires renewed interpretation to address the challenges posed by networked society and the new forms of interaction emerging in digital environments.

Although the Brazilian Child and Adolescent Statute represented a landmark departure from the former Doctrine of the Irregular Situation by recognizing children and adolescents as subjects of rights, it was enacted in a historical context that preceded the widespread diffusion of the commercial internet, social media platforms, artificial intelligence, recommendation algorithms, and the digital ecosystems that now permeate the daily lives of young people. Consequently, numerous contemporary situations involving the protection of fundamental rights have demanded substantial legal and institutional updates.

It is within this context that Law No. 15,211/2025, popularly known as the Digital Child and Adolescent Statute (Digital ECA), was enacted. This legislation broadens the scope of the principle of comprehensive protection by recognizing that virtual environments must likewise serve as spaces where rights are guaranteed. To this end, it establishes legal mechanisms designed to safeguard children's and adolescents' privacy, physical and emotional integrity, healthy development, and digital safety. Beyond imposing obligations on digital platforms, the legislation reaffirms the principle of shared responsibility among the State, families, society, and educational institutions in promoting safe digital environments.

Among all stakeholders involved in implementing this new paradigm, schools occupy a particularly strategic position. Historically conceived as institutions responsible for civic education, schools now assume an even more significant role in fostering competencies related to the critical, ethical, and responsible use of digital technologies. This challenge extends beyond merely incorporating technological resources into teaching practices; rather, it requires the promotion of digital education as a continuous

educational process aimed at preparing students for the conscious exercise of citizenship within digital environments.

This perspective is reinforced by the National Common Core Curriculum (Base Nacional Comum Curricular – BNCC, 2018), particularly through General Competency No. 5, which establishes the development of digital culture through the critical, meaningful, reflective, and ethical use of information and communication technologies as a central educational objective. Accordingly, digital education ceases to be regarded as an ancillary component of schooling and instead becomes a structural element of comprehensive education, integrating technical knowledge, democratic values, human rights, personal data protection, critical thinking, and social participation.

Nevertheless, incorporating these new demands into everyday school practices presents considerable challenges. Initial and continuing teacher education, the development of institutional digital education policies, stronger collaboration between schools and families, compliance with the Brazilian General Data Protection Law (LGPD), and the prevention of cyberbullying, digital violence, misinformation, and the inappropriate exposure of children and adolescents all require coordinated pedagogical, legal, and institutional responses.

Against this backdrop, the following research question emerges: How does Law No. 15,211/2025 redefine the role of schools in promoting digital education and ensuring the comprehensive protection of children and adolescents in light of the challenges posed by digital technologies?

The general objective of this study is to examine the impacts of Law No. 15,211/2025 on the school environment, discussing how digital education can contribute to the critical, ethical, and responsible development of children and adolescents. More specifically, the study seeks to identify the principal innovations introduced by the new legislation and to reflect upon the challenges faced by educational institutions in implementing this new framework of comprehensive protection.

Methodologically, this study adopts a qualitative approach based on bibliographic and documentary research. Its analysis draws upon the 1988 Federal Constitution, the Brazilian Child and Adolescent Statute, Law No. 15,211/2025 (Digital ECA), the National Common Core Curriculum (BNCC), and normative documents concerning the protection of children's and adolescents' rights in digital environments. The theoretical framework integrates contributions from the fields of Children's Rights, Education, and Digital Culture, particularly the reflections of Rizzini (2008) and Volpi (2001) regarding the historical evolution of comprehensive protection; Freire (2022) on critical education and the development of autonomy; and Kenski (2012), Castells (2022), Lévy (2010), and Santaella (2013), whose analyses of digital technologies, network society, and digital culture provide the theoretical foundation for understanding the contemporary challenges of education and digital citizenship. The interdisciplinary perspective adopted herein seeks to understand comprehensive protection not merely as a legal category but as a guiding principle for educational practices that promote the ethical, critical, and responsible use of digital technologies within the school context.

FROM THE DOCTRINE OF THE IRREGULAR SITUATION TO THE DOCTRINE OF COMPREHENSIVE PROTECTION:

The Historical Evolution of Children's and Adolescents' Rights

Understanding the innovations introduced by Law No. 15,211/2025 first requires an examination of the historical development of the legal framework governing the protection of children and adolescents in Brazil. The contemporary recognition of children and adolescents as holders of fundamental rights is the result of a long process of social, political, and legislative transformation that gradually replaced models centered on social control, guardianship, and the institutionalization of poverty.

Throughout the colonial period and much of the Imperial era, Brazilian law contained no specific legal provisions designed to protect children. Children and adolescents—particularly those belonging to the poorest segments of society—were frequently subjected to the same punitive mechanisms applied to adults and were commonly regarded either as labor resources or as objects of charitable assistance. As Rizzini (2008) observes, poor childhood was perceived as a potential threat to social order, thereby legitimizing state interventions aimed primarily at social control rather than the protection of rights.

The Criminal Code of the Brazilian Empire (1830) established criminal liability beginning at fourteen years of age but permitted the prosecution of children between seven and fourteen years old whenever they were deemed capable of "discernment." The subjective nature of this criterion facilitated the criminalization of poverty, allowing social conditions to be conflated with moral

capacity and legal responsibility. Following the abolition of slavery in 1888, the absence of public policies directed toward childhood further intensified the vulnerability of thousands of children and adolescents—especially newly emancipated Black children—who remained without access to education, social protection, or the minimum conditions necessary for their full development.

Brazil's first legal instrument specifically addressing childhood was Decree No. 17,943-A of 1927, commonly known as the Mello Mattos Code. Although this legislation represented a significant step forward by acknowledging the need for specialized legal treatment of children and adolescents, it consolidated what became known as the Doctrine of the Irregular Situation. Under this framework, the term minor encompassed not only adolescents who had committed criminal offenses but also children living in situations of abandonment, poverty, neglect, or social vulnerability. Poverty itself was sufficient to justify state intervention, including compulsory institutionalization. Juvenile judges were vested with broad discretionary authority to determine the lives of these children without the procedural safeguards that characterize the contemporary Democratic Rule of Law.

This minor-centered doctrine was maintained and further reinforced by the 1979 Juvenile Code (Law No. 6,697/1979), enacted during Brazil's military dictatorship. Influenced by the National Security Doctrine, the legislation strengthened the association between poverty and dangerousness, legitimizing the institutionalization of children and adolescents in facilities marked by overcrowding, violence, and the absence of meaningful educational practices. As Volpi (2001) argues, many of these institutions reproduced patterns of exclusion fundamentally incompatible with any genuine

educational mission, functioning primarily as mechanisms of social segregation rather than environments conducive to human development.

A paradigmatic shift began to emerge during Brazil's process of democratization in the second half of the 1980s. Social movements, non-governmental organizations, researchers, and educators led an intense nationwide mobilization advocating for children's rights. These efforts resonated internationally through the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which established a new global standard by recognizing children as full subjects of rights entitled to special protection due to their unique condition as persons in development. Brazil became one of the first countries to ratify the Convention, whose principles directly influenced the drafting of the 1988 Federal Constitution, particularly Article 227, which formally adopted the Doctrine of Comprehensive Protection.

It is the duty of the family, society, and the State to ensure, with absolute priority, the rights of children, adolescents, and young people to life, health, food, education, leisure, professional training, culture, dignity, respect, freedom, and family and community life, while safeguarding them from all forms of negligence, discrimination, exploitation, violence, cruelty, and oppression. (Brazil, 1988, Art. 227)

The 1988 Constitution definitively abandoned the welfare-oriented and punitive conception that had guided Brazilian childhood policies for much of the country's history. Comprehensive protection came to encompass not only the prevention of situations of risk but also the promotion of the physical, intellectual, emotional, moral,

cultural, and social development of children and adolescents, guaranteeing them absolute priority in the formulation and implementation of public policies.

This constitutional paradigm was operationalized through the enactment of Law No. 8,069 of July 13, 1990, which established the Brazilian Child and Adolescent Statute (Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente – ECA). Inspired by both the Federal Constitution and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Statute recognized children and adolescents as persons in a peculiar condition of development and as holders of fundamental rights, definitively replacing the Doctrine of the Irregular Situation with the Doctrine of Comprehensive Protection.

This transformation represented far more than a legislative reform. As emphasized by Rizzini (2008), it inaugurated a new model of social protection grounded in the guarantee of rights, shared responsibility among the family, society, and the State, and the development of public policies capable of ensuring the comprehensive development of children and adolescents. Within this new framework, education assumed a strategic role—not merely as a fundamental right, but also as a powerful instrument for promoting citizenship, human dignity, and social inclusion.

The institutional consolidation of this new system continued over the following decades. A major milestone was the creation of the National System of Socio-Educational Services (Sistema Nacional de Atendimento Socioeducativo – SINASE) through Law No. 12,594/2012, which regulates the implementation of socio-educational measures according to predominantly pedagogical principles. Although specifically directed toward adolescents who have committed

criminal offenses, SINASE reinforces the central role of education as a mechanism of accountability, social inclusion, and rights protection, thereby strengthening the foundations of the Doctrine of Comprehensive Protection.

Nevertheless, the profound transformations resulting from the expansion of the internet, social media, digital platforms, and, more recently, artificial intelligence have introduced unprecedented challenges to the effective protection of children's rights. Conceived in a historical context that preceded the consolidation of digital society, the principle of comprehensive protection has increasingly required new legal instruments capable of addressing issues such as unlawful disclosure of personal data, cyberbullying, the commercial exploitation of children's images, online violence, misinformation, and other violations of rights occurring in digital environments.

Within this new reality, the protection of childhood can no longer be confined to the physical spaces traditionally occupied by families, schools, and local communities. It must also extend to digital environments, where children and adolescents establish social relationships, create content, access information, and construct a substantial portion of their life experiences. The emergence of digital society demonstrates that safeguarding fundamental rights requires not only legal mechanisms of protection but also educational processes capable of developing the competencies necessary for the ethical, critical, and responsible use of digital technologies.

It is precisely within this historical context that Law No. 15,211/2025 must be understood. By updating the Brazilian Child and Adolescent Statute in light of contemporary technological transformations, the legislation expands the reach of the Doctrine of

Comprehensive Protection, recognizing that the promotion of children's rights also depends upon fostering a culture of digital citizenship. Rather than merely responding to the new risks associated with digital connectivity, the law reaffirms the need for coordinated action among the State, families, society, and schools, assigning education a central role in preparing children and adolescents for the safe, ethical, and responsible exercise of citizenship within digital environments.

THE DIGITAL CHILD AND ADOLESCENT STATUTE AND THE EXPANSION OF COMPREHENSIVE PROTECTION IN A CONNECTED SOCIETY

Contemporary society has been profoundly shaped by the expansion of digital technologies, a phenomenon that has transformed communication, knowledge production, social interaction, and civic participation. The internet, social media platforms, mobile devices, and, more recently, artificial intelligence systems have evolved from being auxiliary tools of everyday life into permanent spaces of human interaction. Children and adolescents, born into an era of pervasive digital connectivity, now experience a substantial part of their personal, educational, and social lives within digital environments—a reality that has expanded opportunities for learning while simultaneously increasing their exposure to new forms of vulnerability.

Analyzing this transformation, Castells (2022) argues that the informational society is structured through networks capable of reorganizing economic, political, cultural, and social relations on a global scale. According to the author, information technologies have transformed not only the circulation of knowledge but also the very

organization of society, making connectivity a defining element of contemporary human experience. Within this framework, childhood and adolescence are increasingly experienced in hybrid spaces where the boundaries between the physical world and the digital environment become progressively blurred.

This interpretation is consistent with the reflections of Lévy (2010), who conceives cyberspace as a new environment for the production of collective intelligence. According to Lévy, digital technologies significantly expand the possibilities for collaborative knowledge construction by enabling individuals to share experiences, information, and learning processes in real time. Nevertheless, broader access to technology does not eliminate social inequalities or the risks inherent in digital environments. Consequently, education must extend beyond technical proficiency, fostering instead a critical understanding of the social implications of digital technologies.

Within the Brazilian context, Santaella (2013) argues that digital culture has profoundly transformed the ways individuals learn, communicate, and construct meaning, requiring educational institutions to rethink their pedagogical practices in response to new technological languages and forms of interaction. According to the author, contemporary individuals constantly move between physical and digital environments, constructing identities, relationships, and knowledge in ways that challenge traditional educational models. Understanding digital culture, therefore, requires acknowledging that the virtual environment is no longer peripheral to social life but has become an essential dimension of contemporary citizenship.

However, the opportunities provided by digital technologies coexist with equally significant challenges. The growing exposure of children and adolescents to digital platforms has intensified concerns related to cyberbullying, hate speech, misinformation, commercial exploitation of personal data, unauthorized disclosure of minors' images, online grooming, technology-facilitated sexual violence, and the influence of algorithmic systems on habits, behaviors, and decision-making processes. Added to these challenges are increasing concerns regarding mental health, technological dependency, excessive digital exposure, and the developmental impacts associated with the indiscriminate use of social media during childhood and adolescence.

Although the Brazilian Child and Adolescent Statute (ECA), enacted in 1990, already guaranteed fundamental rights such as dignity, respect, freedom, family and community life, and protection against all forms of violence, it was drafted before the emergence of today's digital society. The technological transformations of the past three decades have clearly demonstrated the need to update Brazil's legal framework for child protection in order to address situations that were unimaginable to lawmakers at the end of the twentieth century.

It is within this context that Law No. 15,211/2025, known as the Digital Child and Adolescent Statute (Digital ECA), assumes particular significance. Rather than replacing the original Child and Adolescent Statute, the new legislation updates it in light of the demands imposed by a digitally connected society. In doing so, it reaffirms the principles of the Doctrine of Comprehensive Protection while extending their application to digital environments. Consequently, the protection of children is no longer confined to the physical

spaces traditionally occupied by families, schools, and communities; it now also encompasses the virtual environments where children and adolescents learn, interact, create content, and shape their identities.

The legislation also became popularly known as the "Felca Law", following the widespread public attention generated by digital influencer Felipe Bressanim ("Felca"), whose public denunciations highlighted the phenomenon of the adultization of children and their inappropriate exposure on social media platforms. Although the legislative proposal had already been under consideration by the National Congress, these public interventions significantly intensified the national debate and accelerated discussions concerning the need for stronger legal protection of childhood in digital environments.

The emergence of the Digital Child and Adolescent Statute (Digital ECA) reflects the necessity of updating Brazil's legal system to address the challenges posed by online environments, particularly those involving children's excessive exposure, exploitation, personal data collection, targeted advertising, and other risks associated with the use of digital platforms. The legislation seeks to expand the principle of comprehensive protection established by the original Child and Adolescent Statute by imposing obligations upon technology companies, creating digital safety mechanisms, and establishing preventive measures applicable to online environments.

Among the principal innovations introduced by Law No. 15,211/2025 are strengthened age-verification mechanisms; expanded responsibilities for digital platforms regarding the prevention and removal of unlawful content involving minors; improved parental

control tools; restrictions on the processing of children's personal data for targeted advertising purposes; and reinforcement of the principle of shared responsibility among the State, families, society, and technology companies. Collectively, these measures demonstrate that comprehensive protection has acquired a preventive dimension specifically aimed at reducing the risks inherent in digital environments.

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of these legal reforms cannot depend exclusively upon governmental authorities or technology platforms. The Doctrine of Comprehensive Protection, as established by Article 227 of the Federal Constitution and reaffirmed in the Child and Adolescent Statute, is fundamentally grounded in the principle of shared responsibility among families, society, and public institutions. Within this framework, education assumes a strategic role in safeguarding fundamental rights. Protecting children in the digital age therefore requires not only legal accountability mechanisms but, above all, the development of individuals capable of critically understanding digital environments and exercising their citizenship in an ethical, responsible, and informed manner.

This understanding closely aligns with the educational philosophy of Paulo Freire (2022), who argues that teaching does not consist of transferring knowledge but rather of creating the conditions through which learners develop intellectual autonomy, critical consciousness, and the capacity to transform reality. Freire's assertion that "the reading of the word must be preceded by the reading of the world" provides a particularly relevant theoretical foundation for contemporary digital education. In a society permeated by algorithms, artificial intelligence, social media platforms, and the massive circulation of information, it is no longer

sufficient to teach children merely how to operate technological devices. Rather, education must prepare them to critically understand the mechanisms governing digital platforms, recognize misinformation, identify online violence, protect their personal data, and employ technology in ways that contribute to democratic knowledge production.

This perspective is reinforced by Kenski (2012), who contends that digital technologies should not be regarded merely as pedagogical resources but as structural elements that redefine the processes of teaching, learning, and knowledge production. According to the author, integrating technology into education requires methodological, cultural, and institutional transformations capable of fostering students' active participation while developing competencies related to critical thinking, collaboration, ethical reasoning, and social responsibility. Consequently, schools are no longer simply institutions for transmitting knowledge; they become essential mediators of the digital experiences lived by children and adolescents.

This understanding is fully consistent with the National Common Core Curriculum (BNCC, 2018), particularly General Competency No. 5, which establishes that students should be able to understand, use, and create digital technologies in critical, meaningful, reflective, and ethical ways that promote communication, access to information, knowledge production, and active citizenship. Within this framework, digital education transcends its instrumental dimension and becomes an essential process of civic formation.

Ultimately, the greatest contribution of Law No. 15,211/2025 lies not merely in establishing new accountability mechanisms for digital

platforms but in expanding the very concept of Comprehensive Protection itself. If the 1990 Child and Adolescent Statute represented a decisive break with the Doctrine of the Irregular Situation by recognizing children and adolescents as holders of rights, the Digital Child and Adolescent Statute extends that protection into virtual environments, acknowledging that the effective realization of these rights also depends upon the development of a robust culture of digital citizenship. Within this context, education assumes a central role, enabling children and adolescents to acquire the competencies necessary to use digital technologies critically, safeguard their rights, respect the dignity of others, and participate ethically, democratically, and responsibly in an increasingly connected society.

DIGITAL EDUCATION AND DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP: New Challenges for Schools

Digital education extends far beyond the instrumental acquisition of technological skills. It constitutes a comprehensive educational process aimed at developing the knowledge, competencies, attitudes, and values necessary for meaningful participation in digital culture. Such preparation encompasses critical thinking, digital literacy, media literacy, online safety, personal data protection, the ability to identify and combat misinformation, and the ethical use of digital technologies. From this perspective, educating for the digital age means preparing individuals to understand the social, cultural, political, and economic implications of technological innovation while recognizing both its opportunities and its inherent risks.

The concept of digital education is intrinsically linked to the profound transformations that digital technologies have brought about in the ways people learn, communicate, work, produce knowledge, and participate in society. Digital technologies are no longer merely auxiliary educational tools; they have become environments for interaction, cultural production, and civic engagement. Consequently, limiting education to the operational use of devices and applications is no longer sufficient. Educational institutions must instead promote learning experiences that enable individuals to critically interpret digital phenomena and to engage with them ethically, responsibly, and autonomously.

In *Education Through Media (Educar com a Mídia)*, Freire and Guimarães (2013) argue that technologies should be understood as instruments of human emancipation capable of expanding individuals' critical understanding of reality and strengthening their participation in society. From this perspective, simply providing access to digital technologies is insufficient. Schools must also prepare students to use them ethically, critically, and responsibly by fostering the capacity to analyze, evaluate, interpret, and produce information consciously. This approach is fully consistent with Freire's conception of education as a practice of freedom, according to which access to information acquires genuine meaning only when accompanied by the ability to question it, contextualize it, and transform it into socially relevant knowledge.

This educational challenge becomes even more pressing in a society characterized by an unprecedented flow of information, where the rapid circulation of content across digital platforms exposes individuals to misinformation, fake news, hate speech, algorithmic manipulation, and numerous other forms of informational distortion.

Accordingly, one of the greatest challenges facing contemporary education is not simply enabling students to access information but equipping them to critically evaluate its reliability, understand the contexts in which it is produced, and employ it in ethical and socially responsible ways. Developing these competencies requires teaching students how to identify credible sources, verify evidence, recognize biases embedded in digital content, and understand the political, economic, and ideological interests that shape the production and circulation of information on the internet.

Within this context, the concepts of media literacy and digital literacy assume particular importance. Media literacy refers to the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, interpret, and produce messages across multiple forms of communication. Digital literacy, in turn, involves the critical appropriation of digital technologies for problem-solving, communication, collaborative knowledge production, and social participation. Together, these concepts expand the traditional understanding of literacy by recognizing that, in contemporary society, reading and writing also entail interpreting multimodal languages, interacting effectively within digital environments, and participating critically and ethically in information networks.

From this perspective, digital citizenship may be understood as the exercise of rights and responsibilities within digital environments through practices grounded in respect for human rights, ethical coexistence, responsible information sharing, privacy protection, and democratic participation in online spaces. Citizenship is therefore no longer confined to physical public spaces but increasingly encompasses interactions mediated by digital technologies, requiring new competencies for coexistence in an interconnected

society. To be a digital citizen is to recognize that actions performed online generate concrete consequences in the real world and therefore require responsibility, empathy, respect for diversity, and commitment to democratic values.

Digital citizenship also encompasses knowledge of rights relating to personal data protection, privacy, freedom of expression, access to information, and digital security. Correspondingly, it requires recognition of the responsibilities that accompany these rights, including respect for standards of online coexistence, opposition to all forms of online violence—such as cyberbullying, discriminatory speech, and the unauthorized dissemination of personal information—and the promotion of respectful digital interactions. Consequently, educating for digital citizenship means preparing individuals to act ethically and responsibly while understanding that digital environments are also spaces for social interaction and democratic participation.

In Brazil, this discussion finds strong support in important legal and educational frameworks. The National Common Core Curriculum (BNCC) identifies Digital Culture as one of the core competencies of Basic Education, emphasizing that students should understand, use, and create digital technologies in critical, meaningful, reflective, and ethical ways. Complementing this framework, the National Digital Education Policy (Law No. 14,533/2023) establishes guidelines for promoting digital education across all educational levels, emphasizing digital inclusion, the development of digital competencies, media education, innovation, and the preparation of citizens capable of participating effectively in digital society. Together, these documents demonstrate that digital education is no

longer a supplementary educational topic but has become a foundational dimension of contemporary educational processes.

Within this scenario, schools assume an increasingly strategic role. Beyond incorporating digital technologies into pedagogical practice, educational institutions must create learning experiences that encourage the critical, creative, collaborative, and safe use of digital technologies. This requires pedagogical approaches that promote inquiry, problem-solving, knowledge production, civic participation, and ethical reflection on the impacts of technology in everyday life. Consequently, teacher education—both initial and continuing—becomes indispensable to the successful implementation of digital education, since teachers are responsible for mediating learning processes that integrate technical, cognitive, social, and ethical competencies (Santos, 2025).

Promoting digital citizenship also requires cultivating a culture of democratic participation mediated by digital technologies. This involves encouraging pedagogical practices that foster dialogue, collaboration, respect for diversity of opinions, and the responsible creation of digital content. From this perspective, schools play a fundamental role in preparing individuals capable of using digital environments not merely as consumers of information but also as producers of knowledge, agents of social transformation, and active participants in democratic life.

Digital education should therefore be recognized as an essential right for the comprehensive development of individuals in the twenty-first century. By promoting critical, ethical, and civic competencies for the responsible use of digital technologies, it enables children, adolescents, and adults alike to exercise full

citizenship within a society characterized by pervasive connectivity, the rapid circulation of information, and continuous technological transformation. In this sense, educating for the digital age means strengthening individual autonomy, expanding opportunities for democratic participation, and preparing citizens to confront the challenges and opportunities of digital culture in an informed, responsible, and socially engaged manner.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The enactment of Law No. 15,211/2025, known as the Digital Child and Adolescent Statute (Digital ECA), represents a significant milestone in the evolution of the Brazilian legal framework governing the protection of children and adolescents. Rather than creating an entirely new system of rights, the legislation updates the principle of Comprehensive Protection established by the 1988 Federal Constitution and the Child and Adolescent Statute, extending its application to digital environments that have become integral to children's and adolescents' daily lives.

Throughout this study, it has been demonstrated that the expansion of digital technologies has profoundly transformed the ways in which children and adolescents learn, communicate, build relationships, and exercise citizenship. Although these technologies create unprecedented opportunities for learning, participation, and knowledge production, they also expose young people to new forms of vulnerability, including cyberbullying, online violence, misinformation, the commercial exploitation of personal data, algorithmic manipulation, and various violations of fundamental rights. In this context, the updating of the legal framework was both necessary and timely.

The analysis also demonstrated that the effectiveness of the Digital Child and Adolescent Statute depends not only on the creation of new legal obligations for digital platforms or on enhanced regulatory mechanisms but also on the active participation of all actors sharing responsibility for children's protection. The constitutional principle of shared responsibility requires coordinated action by the State, families, society, educational institutions, and technology companies to ensure that digital environments become spaces where fundamental rights are effectively protected.

Within this framework, schools emerge as key institutions for implementing the principles established by the new legislation. Digital education should not be understood merely as technological training or the incorporation of digital devices into classroom practice. Rather, it must be recognized as a comprehensive educational process aimed at developing critical thinking, ethical awareness, media literacy, digital literacy, responsible online behavior, and democratic participation. Preparing students to understand the functioning of digital environments, critically evaluate information, protect their personal data, recognize online risks, and exercise responsible digital citizenship constitutes one of the central educational challenges of the twenty-first century.

The discussion presented in this article also reinforces that digital citizenship is inseparable from democratic citizenship. As social, political, educational, and cultural interactions increasingly migrate to digital environments, guaranteeing children's rights necessarily includes ensuring their right to participate safely, ethically, critically, and autonomously within these spaces. Consequently, digital education becomes an indispensable instrument for the realization of the constitutional principle of Comprehensive Protection.

Finally, it should be emphasized that implementing the principles introduced by Law No. 15,211/2025 will require continuous investment in public policies, teacher education, institutional planning, interdisciplinary research, and collaboration among schools, families, public authorities, and technology companies. Future studies may further investigate the practical implementation of digital education policies in Brazilian schools, evaluate their effectiveness, and identify educational strategies capable of strengthening the protection and full development of children and adolescents within an increasingly complex digital society.

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