

Presentation-based media and information literacy: Grade 12 technical-vocational students' lived experiences and perceived links to digital citizenship

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Abstract

This study explored how Grade 12 technical-vocational students experienced a researcher-developed 21st Century Skills Presentation Approach (21stCSPA) in Media and Information Literacy (MIL), with particular attention to how they perceived inquiry, collaboration, communication, creativity, and responsible information use. Using descriptive phenomenology, ten purposively selected students from a private Philippine senior high school participated in individual semi-structured interviews. Five themes described the shared experience: participants reported movement from routine compliance towards more engaged participation; they perceived repeated opportunities to practise critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration; they encountered difficulties in source evaluation, group coordination, time, and technology; they relied on teacher and peer support, reflection, rehearsal, and digital resources; and they recommended stronger preparation, ethical technology routines, inclusive collaboration, and accessible resources. These findings represent participants' retrospective perceptions rather than demonstrated learning gains or causal effects. Conceptually, the study positions MIL as the curricular domain, civic online reasoning as a set of source-evaluation practices, the four competencies as cross-cutting learning demands, and digital citizenship as a broader interpretive lens for ethical and responsible participation. The study contributes a phenomenological account of how a structured presentation cycle may be experienced as connecting classroom information practices with perceived responsibilities in digital participation, while identifying conditions and limitations that warrant further study.

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Introduction

Digital information environments expand young people's opportunities to learn, create, communicate, and participate in public life, while also exposing them to misinformation, manipulation, privacy risks, and unequal opportunities for meaningful participation. Media and Information Literacy (MIL) addresses the ability to locate, interpret, evaluate, create, and



communicate information critically, ethically, and responsibly (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2021). Digital citizenship is broader: it concerns informed participation, respectful interaction, rights and responsibilities, and judgement in networked spaces (Choi et al., 2017; Pangrazio & Sefton-Green, 2021).

This civic dimension is important because the ability to assess information underpins participation in democratic and community life. Research repeatedly shows that adolescents and adults can struggle to identify the people and organisations behind online claims, corroborate evidence, and distinguish reliable information from misleading content (Breakstone et al., 2021; McGrew et al., 2018; Nygren & Guath, 2019). Information literacy appears especially consequential for recognising false news (Jones-Jang et al., 2021), while news literacy is associated with greater scepticism towards information circulated on social media (Vraga & Tully, 2021). Such findings caution against treating young people as automatically competent simply because they are frequent technology users.

Instruction can improve information judgement when it makes expert strategies visible and gives learners opportunities to practise them. Short media-literacy interventions have increased discernment between mainstream and false news in varied settings (Guess et al., 2020). Classroom interventions that teach learners to investigate who is behind a source, seek independent evidence, and read laterally have likewise improved students' online evaluation practices (McGrew, 2020; McGrew & Byrne, 2021). Polizzi (2020) argues that digital-literacy curricula should join functional competence with critical knowledge of how digital information is produced and evaluated. In civic terms, this means that MIL instruction should help students ask not only whether they can use a platform, but also whose interests are represented, what evidence supports a claim, and what consequences may follow from sharing it.

Studies in citizenship education reinforce this need. Student teachers have described digital citizenship as a combination of digital literacy, behavioural norms, and moral guidance (Prasetyo et al., 2022). Senior high school learners' critical literacy has also been linked to data-informed decisions, communication, tolerance, and action, although practical civic action may remain less developed than interpretive knowledge (Nurjanah et al., 2024). Research on online civic education emphasises that technology, curriculum, educator competence, and digital-literacy materials must work together if learners are to become responsible young digital citizens (Halimi et al., 2022). Similarly, digital citizenship has been associated with the quality of civic learning, including learners' capacity to select information responsibly (Alrakhman et al., 2024), while technology-enhanced civic materials are valued when they support creative and participatory learning (Devi et al., 2022). Recent evidence that knowledge of digital ethics does not necessarily prevent misuse further suggests that ethical understanding must be translated into repeated practice and accountable habits (Sapulette, 2026).

These civic and informational aims align with broader twenty-first-century competencies. Reviews describe critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration as closely connected with digital competence (van Laar et al., 2017). Yet competencies do not develop through labels alone. Learners need tasks that require them to make decisions, create meaningful products, explain ideas to real or simulated audiences, negotiate responsibilities, and revise their work. Project- and performance-oriented pedagogies can support engagement, collaboration, disciplinary learning, and authentic application when their design includes clear goals, guidance, iteration, and feedback (Almulla, 2020; Guo et al., 2020). Cooperative learning is likewise most productive when interaction is structured and teachers explicitly support productive talk and shared responsibility (Gillies, 2016). Reviews of educational technology caution, however, that engagement is multidimensional and context-dependent; the presence of technology does not by itself guarantee cognitive, behavioural, or affective participation (Bond et al., 2020).

In this study, these related concepts are treated as analytically distinct. MIL is the curricular and literacy domain in which students work with media and information. Civic online

reasoning refers more specifically to practices for judging online information, such as investigating source provenance and corroborating claims (McGrew et al., 2018). Critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration are treated as cross-cutting twenty-first-century competencies enacted during the presentation process (van Laar et al., 2017), not as equivalent to MIL or digital citizenship. Digital citizenship is used only as a broader interpretive lens for considering participants' accounts of privacy awareness, responsible sharing, source verification, respectful dialogue, and ethical participation; it was not directly measured as an outcome.

The 21st Century Skills Presentation Approach (21stCSPA) was developed as a structured, learner-centred presentation cycle rather than a one-time reporting task. Its eight phases are orientation and motivation; collaborative planning; research and source validation; creative output development; presentation; teacher, peer, and self-feedback; revision; and synthesis with real-world MIL issues. Students may use formats such as news reports, debates, documentaries, talk shows, podcasts, digital stories, dramatisations, or public-service announcements. Across formats, they investigate claims, evaluate sources, distribute roles, make design choices, communicate with an audience, respond to questions, and reflect on product and process. Research on oral-presentation pedagogy similarly emphasises the importance of explicit objectives, opportunities to practise, feedback, peer and self-assessment, and aligned learning environments rather than treating presentation as a final performance only (Murillo-Zamorano & Montanero, 2018; van Ginkel et al., 2015). Student presentations have also been examined as dialogic pedagogical practices that can support creative and critical engagement when embedded in a broader learning design (Ai et al., 2020).

Three gaps motivate the present study. First, substantial research on media literacy, civic online reasoning, project-based learning, and presentation competence has emphasised measured outcomes, instructional design, performance, or feedback effects (Guess et al., 2020; Guo et al., 2020; McGrew, 2020; Murillo-Zamorano & Montanero, 2018; van Ginkel et al., 2015), leaving comparatively less attention to how secondary learners describe the lived demands and meanings of an integrated presentation cycle. Second, presentation research has often focused on oral-performance competence, assessment, feedback, or discipline-specific use (Ai et al., 2020; Murillo-Zamorano & Montanero, 2018; van Ginkel et al., 2015), whereas the 21stCSPA combines inquiry, source validation, creative representation, collaboration, feedback, revision, and reflection as one sustained MIL process. Third, digital-citizenship research frequently examines knowledge, attitudes, practices, or competency-related constructs; a phenomenological design offers a different contribution by examining how students make sense of classroom experiences that they themselves associate with more careful and responsible information use. This study therefore does not test whether the 21stCSPA causes digital-citizenship outcomes; it examines the meanings participants attributed to the experience.

Accordingly, this study explored the lived experiences of Grade 12 technical-vocational students learning MIL through the 21stCSPA. Its distinctive contribution is phenomenological: it describes how learners experienced the approach, including positive, difficult, uneven, and context-dependent aspects, and then considers digital-citizenship relevance as a conceptual implication rather than a direct finding or measured outcome.

Specifically, the study addressed five research questions: (1) How did participants describe perceived changes in their attitudes and classroom behaviours while experiencing the 21stCSPA in MIL? (2) How did participants experience opportunities to practise critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration during the 21stCSPA? (3) What intellectual, interpersonal, technological, and time-related challenges did participants encounter? (4) What personal, peer, teacher, and resource-based supports did participants describe using to cope with those challenges? (5) What improvements did participants recommend for more inclusive, ethical, and sustainable implementation of the 21stCSPA?

Method

Research design and context

The study used qualitative descriptive phenomenology to examine the 21stCSPA as consciously experienced and described by students who had lived through it. This design was appropriate because the purpose was not to estimate an effect, compare groups statistically, or test a causal model, but to describe common and divergent meanings in participants' experiences. Moustakas' (1994) approach guided the movement from significant statements to textural descriptions of what was experienced, structural descriptions of how it was experienced, and a synthesis of shared meanings. The phenomenological analysis remained grounded in participants' descriptions; links to digital citizenship and related theory were reserved for the discussion as conceptual interpretation rather than treated as direct phenomenological findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Neubauer et al., 2019).

The study was conducted during academic year 2023–2024 in a private technical-vocational senior high school in Negros Occidental, Philippines. The institution and author-identifying details are withheld in this version for double-blind review. The participants encountered the 21stCSPA in their regular Grade 12 MIL classes. Their technical-vocational specialisations included shielded metal arc welding, food and beverage services, computer programming, and electronic products assembly and servicing. The natural classroom setting allowed participants to describe an approach experienced as part of ordinary instruction rather than a short research-only intervention.

The instructional phenomenon

The 21stCSPA is a researcher-developed, learner-centred presentation framework. Each presentation cycle began with clarification of competencies, objectives, expected outputs, assessment criteria, and available formats. Students then formed groups, interpreted the task, selected a format, distributed roles, and prepared a work plan. Roles could include leader, researcher, scriptwriter, designer, presenter, editor, technical support, documenter, or time manager, allowing participation to reflect different strengths while preserving shared accountability.

During the inquiry phase, groups gathered information from textbooks, scholarly materials, government publications, reputable websites, and multimedia sources. They were expected to distinguish fact from opinion, examine credibility and bias, corroborate evidence, acknowledge sources, and use digital material ethically. Groups transformed their findings into creative outputs, presented to classmates, and responded to audience questions. Teacher feedback, peer feedback, and self-reflection addressed content accuracy, critical analysis, creativity, communication, teamwork, ethical media use, and audience engagement. Students were encouraged to revise subsequent work and relate each lesson to responsible media consumption, information sharing, digital citizenship, and lifelong learning. The sequence remained stable, but schedules and formats shifted based on topic complexity and available resources. This flexible structure reflects differentiated instruction's attention to readiness, interest, and learning profile (Tomlinson, 2014) and sociocultural accounts of learning through supported interaction (Vygotsky, 1978).

Participants and recruitment

Purposive sampling identified ten Grade 12 students who had completed the instructional approach and could provide detailed reflections. Five were consistent honour students from Grade 11 onward, and five were identified in school records as lower-performing students. These categories were used only as a maximum-variation sampling device to broaden the range of experiences; they were not comparison groups, and no claim is made that performance status explains thematic differences. The analysis therefore focused on patterns and divergences across the full sample. A sample of ten was considered appropriate for the depth-oriented

purpose of phenomenology, with adequacy judged by the richness, scope, and information power of the interviews rather than by a fixed numerical threshold (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022).

Eligible students received written information about the study purpose, procedures, voluntary nature, possible risks and benefits, confidentiality protections, and the right to withdraw without penalty. Invitations and consent materials were distributed electronically. Because the researcher had developed the 21stCSPA and had served as the students' MIL teacher, interviews were conducted only after instructional implementation, and participants were explicitly told that participation, refusal, withdrawal, or the content of their responses would not affect grades, standing, or the teacher-student relationship. Identifiers were removed from transcripts and quotations. These procedures were intended to reduce, although they could not eliminate, the power imbalance and social-desirability risks created by the teacher-researcher relationship.

Data collection

Data were collected through individual semi-structured interviews conducted through Google Meet. The interview guide addressed five domains aligned with the research questions: perceived changes in attitudes and behaviour; experiences of the four core competencies; difficulties encountered; coping strategies; and recommendations for improving the approach. Three specialists in qualitative research, educational research, and MIL reviewed the guide for face and content validity. The researcher also pilot-tested it with learners similar to the target participants who were not included in the final sample; feedback improved wording, order, and clarity.

Each interview lasted approximately 45–60 minutes. Field notes documented contextual observations and preliminary reflections. Recordings were transcribed verbatim. The researcher checked each transcript and returned it to the participant for member checking; participants could affirm, clarify, or modify their statements before analysis. Final verified transcripts constituted the primary dataset.

Phenomenological analysis and trustworthiness

Analysis followed Moustakas' (1994) descriptive phenomenological procedures. First, the researcher repeatedly read each transcript while practising epoché, recording rather than suppressing prior expectations about the approach. Second, the researcher horizontalised every experience-relevant statement as initially having equal value. The researcher removed repetitive, vague, or unrelated material, leaving significant statements. Third, the researcher formulated meanings from these statements and clustered related meanings across participants. Fourth, the researcher refined clusters into themes and subthemes while preserving divergent accounts. Fifth, textural descriptions captured what participants experienced, and structural descriptions explained how instructional and contextual conditions shaped those experiences. Finally, the authors integrated the textural and structural accounts into a statement of the shared essence.

The analytic process was phenomenological rather than a generic frequency count. Themes were retained because they expressed recurring meaning across the dataset, not because a numerical threshold was met. This emphasis is consistent with guidance for descriptive phenomenological analysis, which requires openness, reflective attention, and movement between parts and whole (Sundler et al., 2019).

Credibility was supported through prolonged interviews, probing, transcript verification, and anonymised quotations. Dependability was addressed through an audit trail documenting recruitment, interview procedures, transcript checking, coding, theme refinement, and interpretive decisions. Confirmability was strengthened through epoché and reflexive journaling focused specifically on the researcher's roles as approach developer, teacher, interviewer, and analyst. No independent coder or second analyst was involved; therefore, no

intercoder agreement is reported. Instead, transparency rests on the audit trail, participant verification, explicit separation of descriptive findings from later theoretical interpretation, and acknowledgment of the remaining risk of confirmation bias. Transferability was supported through contextual description of the school, participants, instructional sequence, and constraints (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Results and Discussion

Analysis generated five themes that formed a connected experiential trajectory rather than five independent outcomes. The wording below deliberately reflects participants' perceptions and opportunities to practise, not verified changes in competence. Because academic-performance categories were introduced for sampling variation rather than comparison, themes are reported across the full sample; the data do not support subgroup-level claims about honour versus lower-performing students. Positive accounts are presented alongside experiences of anxiety, information uncertainty, collaboration problems, technical constraints, and uneven participation. Table 1 summarises the thematic structure.

Table 1.

Themes and core experiential meanings

Theme	Core experiential meaning
1. From passive reception to perceived engaged responsibility	Participants described greater motivation, confidence, participation, and attention to source verification, privacy, and responsible information use; these changes were retrospective perceptions rather than measured effects.
2. Perceived opportunities to practise the four competencies	Inquiry and performance were described as repeated opportunities to practise critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration, with uneven ease across tasks and participants.
3. Challenge, pressure, and conditional growth	Adjustment to learner-centred work, source evaluation, group coordination, time, and technology created pressure; participants described some challenges as manageable when support and resources were available.
4. Coping through relational support and self-regulation	Teacher and peer guidance, task decomposition, rehearsal, reflection, and digital resources were described as interacting supports for persistence; resilience is interpreted as relational rather than solely individual.
5. Participant priorities for sustainable implementation	Participants emphasised preparation, explicit skill-building, ethical technology use, inclusive group processes, accessible resources, and constructive assessment; author-derived implications are separated in the discussion.

Source: Interview data analysed by the researcher.

Theme 1. From passive reception to perceived engaged responsibility

Participants generally described a perceived shift from routine compliance towards more active participation in MIL. Their accounts emphasised greater interest, willingness to contribute, confidence in speaking, appreciation of classmates' ideas, and increased caution about information. Participant 2 described being 'a more active participant in class discussions' and 'more adept at critically evaluating information,' while Participant 7 described becoming 'more positive and proactive.' These are retrospective self-reports; the study did not independently observe or measure changes in motivation, responsibility, or evaluation skills.

Before, I used to do everything alone because for me it would be chaos having different kinds of suggestions and opinions, but after experiencing the 21st CSPA, I realised that collaboration produces more credible and reliable outputs. (Participant 1)

The quotation illustrates how one participant reinterpreted collaboration as more than a division of labour: exchanging perspectives was seen as a way to improve a product's credibility and quality. Across the dataset, the aspects of responsible digital participation most clearly represented were source verification before sharing, attention to misinformation and disinformation, privacy awareness, respectful consideration of others' ideas, and ethical communication. At the same time, the shift was not uncomplicated or universal; participants also described pressure, unfamiliarity with learner-centred work, disagreement, and uncertainty about source credibility, which are developed in Theme 3.

These accounts are consistent with research suggesting that active learning can support engagement when students make consequential decisions and produce work for an audience (Almulla, 2020), while technology-rich engagement remains multidimensional and context-dependent (Bond et al., 2020). In citizenship terms, the finding is limited to how participants interpreted their own classroom conduct: some connected listening to others, explaining claims, privacy awareness, and checking information before communication with ideas of responsible participation. This interpretive link is compatible with multidimensional accounts of digital citizenship (Prasetyo et al., 2022), but it does not establish digital-citizenship development as an observed outcome.

The theme therefore describes perceived engagement and responsibility while preserving variation in experience. Positive retrospective accounts were meaningful to participants, but they coexisted with barriers that sometimes made the same presentation process demanding, anxiety-producing, or difficult to access.

Theme 2. Perceived opportunities to practise critical thinking, creativity, communication and collaboration

Participants did not describe the four competencies as separate lessons; they experienced them as interdependent demands of completing a shared presentation. Critical thinking was associated with searching, filtering, comparing, and defending information. Creativity was associated with selecting formats, designing materials, and adapting content for an audience. Communication involved organising ideas, listening, speaking, and responding. Collaboration involved negotiating roles, resolving differences, and maintaining shared responsibility. The findings are therefore framed as perceived opportunities to practise these competencies rather than evidence that competency levels increased.

The 21st CSPA has contributed to the development of my critical thinking skills by being creative in filtering, searching, and evaluating information. It helped me become more careful in determining whether the information I encounter is reliable and credible. (Participant 1)

Critical-thinking accounts were strongly source-oriented: participants referred to credibility, bias, misinformation, evidence, and verification before acceptance or sharing. This resembles civic online reasoning practices that investigate source provenance and corroborate claims beyond a single webpage (McGrew, 2020; McGrew et al., 2018). However, participants also reported uncertainty about where to begin and how to judge conflicting or questionable sources, indicating that perceived practice did not mean mastery. The public requirement to present and answer questions may have made information evaluation consequential because evidence could be questioned by classmates or the teacher.

Creativity was experienced as freedom within academic constraints. Participants described dramatisations, multimedia resources, visual designs, and interactive formats as ways of making concepts understandable and engaging. For some, this opened space to think 'outside the box'; for others, creative production added time and technical demands. Creativity in the interviews therefore involved choices about representing evidence for an audience, not merely decorative production. This is consistent with project-based learning research that

emphasises public products, problem solving, and authentic application while also recognising that design and support shape outcomes (Guo et al., 2020).

Through the 21stCSPA, I learned how to effectively articulate complex Media and Information Literacy concepts using language that my audience could easily understand. (Participant 7)

Communication was described through rehearsal, delivery, audience interaction, and feedback. Participants reported clearer expression, active listening, better organisation of ideas, and greater confidence, but public performance also created pressure for students unfamiliar with this form of learning. Their accounts suggest that communication practice was tied to disciplinary understanding: explaining MIL concepts required selecting essential information, sequencing ideas, and anticipating questions.

Collaboration was described through role allocation, exchange of ideas, joint preparation, and mutual assistance. Yet it was among the most unevenly experienced competencies: participants also reported misunderstandings, conflicting ideas, incompatible schedules, and unequal coordination. This pattern supports cooperative-learning research emphasising that beneficial collaboration depends on structured interdependence, interaction, and accountability rather than simply placing students in groups (Gillies, 2016). Role structures provided varied entry points, but they did not remove the need for communication norms, conflict-management support, and monitoring of contribution.

Taken together, participants perceived the four competencies as integrated within inquiry and performance. The digital-citizenship relevance is interpretive rather than direct: evaluating publicly circulating claims, creating messages, communicating to peers, and negotiating differences can be read as classroom practices with civic relevance. This interpretation is consistent with the conceptual relationship between digital and twenty-first-century competencies (van Laar et al., 2017), but the study did not measure transfer to civic behaviour beyond the classroom.

Theme 3. Challenge, pressure and conditional growth

Positive accounts coexisted with substantial difficulty. Participants described pressure when moving from teacher-directed lessons to an approach requiring independent research, group coordination, creative production, and public performance. Some initially felt unable to meet expectations or were unfamiliar with learning through presentations. The transfer of responsibility was therefore experienced simultaneously as an opportunity for participation and a source of anxiety; the analysis does not assume that difficulty automatically produced growth.

I cannot keep up with the expectations and the pressure is really there every time, but I did not let them stop me from learning. When I was in Grade 12, I found it challenging because I was new to that kind of method in teaching. (Participant 1)

The most civic-relevant intellectual challenge concerned source credibility. Participants reported uncertainty about whether sources were factual, reliable, biased, or conflicting. One described difficulty deciding 'where and how to start' when analysing information. These experiences are consistent with large-scale findings that high school students often rely on superficial indicators and fail to investigate source organisations or corroborate online claims (Breakstone et al., 2021). Swedish teenagers have shown similar difficulty evaluating false, biased, and vetted news despite confidence in their searching ability (Nygren & Guath, 2019). The challenge therefore should not be interpreted as failure of the approach. It reveals why source evaluation requires explicit modelling, guided practice, and feedback rather than an instruction to 'use credible sources.'

Communication and collaboration also produced difficulty. Participants described misunderstandings, conflicting ideas, incompatible schedules, and uncertainty about how to

communicate effectively. These tensions complicate celebratory accounts of group work. They indicate that diverse viewpoints can improve a product only when students have procedural support for listening, decision making, conflict resolution, and equitable contribution. Teachers need to observe group processes, not just final performances.

Time limits, technical problems, information overload, and uneven access to devices also affected preparation. These constraints mattered because the approach linked several technology-dependent tasks—locating and checking sources, communicating with group members, producing multimedia materials, revising outputs, and preparing for presentation. When access or equipment was limited, the coordination burden of completing these interdependent tasks increased. The interviews did not provide enough detail to attribute these difficulties to particular causes such as data caps, device specifications or shared-device arrangements, so such causes are not inferred here. The finding instead supports the broader point that technology can enable creativity and access while simultaneously introducing resource dependencies. Halimi et al. (2022) similarly emphasise that digital civic learning depends on alignment among technology, curriculum, educator competence, and materials.

For this reason, difficulty is not treated here as inherently productive. Participants' accounts suggest that challenge became potentially constructive only when it remained manageable and when support, time, feedback, and usable resources were available. Excessive ambiguity, resource inequality, or fear of public embarrassment could instead constrain participation. The practical implication—presented as an author interpretation rather than a direct phenomenological finding—is to preserve authentic challenge while reducing avoidable barriers through modelling, checkpoints, formative feedback, accessible options, and psychologically safer opportunities to practise before public performance.

Theme 4. Coping through relational support, reflection and self-regulation

Participants responded to difficulty through both interpersonal supports and self-regulatory strategies. The most prominent relational resource in their accounts was guidance from teachers and peers: they sought clarification, listened to classmates, consulted instructors, and used feedback to revise understanding. In Vygotskian terms, the social environment provided mediation that supported performance beyond what learners could initially accomplish alone (Vygotsky, 1978). These accounts also show that learner-centred instruction did not mean the teacher was absent.

When encountering difficulties, I sought clarification from my peers or instructors, utilized online resources for additional understanding, and practiced applying the skills in real-world scenarios. (Participant 2)

Participants also described self-regulatory practices such as breaking tasks into smaller steps, rehearsing, preparing in advance, identifying what they already understood, and focusing on remaining gaps. These strategies addressed different challenges from interpersonal support: task decomposition and rehearsal helped manage workload and performance pressure, whereas teacher and peer guidance helped clarify expectations, content, and source-evaluation problems. Reflection after presentations was described as a way to translate feedback into subsequent preparation.

Digital resources formed a third support system. Participants used academic libraries, tutorials, online courses, forums, computers, and instructional guides to clarify concepts and improve products. Their accounts illustrate an important distinction: technology was helpful when used purposefully to locate, verify, create, or revise, not merely because it was available. UNESCO's (2021) MIL framework similarly treats technology use as inseparable from critical evaluation, creation, communication, and ethics.

Accordingly, resilience is interpreted here as relational and contextual rather than as a stable individual trait or an expectation that students should simply endure poorly designed

tasks. Persistence emerged from the interaction of self-regulation with supportive people, understandable feedback, time to practice, and usable resources. This distinction matters because student effort alone cannot solve structural barriers. In civic terms, the relevance is again interpretive: a classroom in which students can ask questions, revise positions, and seek reliable assistance may model norms of responsible participation without demonstrating that such norms transfer beyond the classroom.

Theme 5. Participant priorities for sustainable and inclusive implementation

Participants' recommendations converged most clearly on three priorities: stronger preparation for active participation, educational and ethical use of technology, and an inclusive collaborative climate. They called for workshops and guided practice in presentation, critical thinking, source evaluation, and communication before complex tasks. These priorities respond directly to the adjustment, source-evaluation, and performance difficulties described in Theme 3 and suggest that learner autonomy should be developed progressively rather than assumed.

Students should be empowered through hands-on workshops, interactive learning activities, and collaborative experiences that prepare them to evaluate information critically and participate actively in learning. (Participant 2)

A second participant-derived priority was purposeful and ethical technology use. Participants wanted technology to support research, creativity, and collaboration, with attention to privacy, online safety, copyright, and ethical conduct. These concerns are consistent with accounts of digital citizenship as combining capability, norms, rights, and responsible participation (Choi et al., 2017; Pangrazio & Sefton-Green, 2021). The interview evidence supports these priorities as recommendations; more detailed routines for documenting sources, permissions, or data protection appear below as author-derived implementation implications rather than as direct participant attributions.

A third participant-derived priority was a classroom climate where students could express opinions without ridicule. Participants valued inquiry, mutual respect, and meaningful opportunities to contribute. This concern is particularly relevant to presentation-based learning because performance is visible and students vary in confidence, fluency, and access to technical resources. The participant evidence therefore points to inclusion and psychological safety as conditions for participation, rather than to polished performance as the defining indicator of success.

Building on these participant priorities, the author proposes—explicitly as an implementation interpretation rather than a direct finding—a four-layer refinement of the 21stCSPA: (1) explicit modelling of source evaluation, message design, oral communication, teamwork, and ethical media use; (2) scaffolded production with checkpoints for research quality, role equity, rehearsal, and feedback; (3) enabling conditions that provide realistic time, accessible devices or low-resource alternatives, and teacher support; and (4) assessment that values evidence, reasoning, ethical practice, collaboration, and reflection alongside delivery. This model translates the themes into testable design propositions for future implementation.

Cross-theme synthesis, contribution and limitations

Participants describe the shared experience as a negotiated movement toward more active, reflective, collaborative, and responsibility-oriented participation. This movement was neither smooth nor universal. Accounts of motivation and confidence coexisted with anxiety, uncertainty about information, disagreement, technical limitations, and time pressure. With support and repeated practice, participants often interpreted these difficulties as part of learning to communicate, evaluate information, create, and work with others; however, the data do not show that all difficulties were resolved or that all participants changed in the same way.

As a conceptual implication—not a phenomenological finding—the presentation cycle may be understood as a classroom setting in which students encounter practices relevant to digital citizenship: deciding what information deserves trust, representing claims for an audience, responding to alternative views, and considering responsibilities attached to communication. This interpretation should not be read as evidence that the 21stCSPA created a ‘small public sphere’ or produced civic participation beyond the classroom. Rather, participants’ descriptions suggest possible connections between MIL practice and broader norms of responsible digital participation that future research can examine directly.

Several limitations constrain interpretation. Participants’ accounts were retrospective perceptions collected after instruction; the study included no comparison group, pretest, performance measure, classroom observer, or behavioural measure of digital citizenship. The sample was small, purposive, and drawn from one private technical-vocational school. Academic-performance categories broadened sampling variation but were not analysed as comparison groups, so draw no subgroup conclusions without a dedicated comparative analysis. The same researcher developed the approach, taught the students, conducted the interviews, and analysed the data, creating risks of power imbalance, social desirability, and confirmation bias despite delayed interviewing, separation from grading, member checking, reflexive journaling, anonymisation, and an audit trail. No independent coding process was used. Online interviews may also have reduced nonverbal information and may have posed access constraints. These limitations are especially important when interpreting positive accounts of perceived change.

Future research should prioritise three directions. First, multi-site qualitative studies can test whether the experiential patterns recur across school types, strands, and cultural contexts. Second, classroom observation and artefact analysis can compare what students say changed with how source evaluation, collaboration, communication, and ethical media use are enacted in practice. Third, mixed-methods or quasi-experimental studies using validated measures can examine whether specific components—such as lateral-reading instruction, structured role rotation, or staged feedback—are associated with measurable outcomes beyond ordinary presentation tasks.

Conclusion

This descriptive phenomenological study examined how ten Grade 12 technical-vocational students experienced a structured presentation approach in MIL. Participants generally described greater engagement and repeated opportunities to practise critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration, while also reporting substantial difficulties in adapting to learner-centred responsibility, evaluating source credibility, coordinating peers, managing time, and using technology. Their accounts emphasised that coping depended on both self-regulatory strategies and relational supports from teachers, peers, feedback, and accessible resources.

The study does not provide evidence that presentation pedagogy causes digital citizenship. Rather, it offers a learner-centred account of how participants connected classroom practices—checking evidence, creating messages, listening to others, negotiating responsibility, responding to questions, and revising work—with ideas of careful and responsible information use. Digital citizenship is therefore best treated as a conceptual implication of the lived experience, not as a demonstrated outcome.

The findings are contextual, perceptual, and non-causal. For practice, they suggest implementing the 21stCSPA gradually through explicit source-evaluation instruction, structured collaboration, formative checkpoints, ethical technology routines, accessible alternatives, and psychologically safe participation. For research, the priority is to examine these proposed design features across settings and to combine lived-experience evidence with observation, artifact analysis, and validated outcome measures. Such work can determine

whether the perceived connections identified here translate into equitable and durable practices in contemporary information environments.

Authors' contributions

Denmark Yonson: Conceptualisation, methodology, formal analysis, validation, writing – original draft, writing – review and editing, and supervision. Res Glimmer Tiano: Conceptualisation, investigation, data curation, formal analysis, writing – original draft, and writing – review and editing. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Competing interests

The author developed and implemented the 21st Century Skills Presentation Approach and served as the participants' Media and Information Literacy teacher before conducting the interviews and analysis. This multiple-role relationship constitutes a potential non-financial interest and a source of power imbalance, social desirability, and confirmation bias. To mitigate these risks, interviews occurred after instructional implementation; participation was separated from grading; participants were informed that refusal or responses would not affect academic standing; transcripts were member-checked and anonymised; and epoché, reflexive journaling, and an audit trail were used. No independent coder was involved, and this limitation is acknowledged explicitly. No financial conflicts of interest are reported.

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Ethics Approval

We obtained administrative permission from the participating school before recruitment. The study procedures ensured voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, anonymisation, the right to withdraw without academic consequence, permission to audio-record and secure data handling. Interviews were conducted after course implementation to reduce perceived coercion arising from the researcher's role as the participants' former teacher.

Consent to Participate

The researchers obtained electronic informed consent from all individual participants included in the study.

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