



MEDIA AND DIGITAL LITERACY

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Section 1 – The effectiveness of digital devices

Are the digital devices children are using an effective way for them to access media content and therefore further their development within Information Communication Technology (ICT)? The effects of digital devices and use of the internet for children has been a widely discussed subject for some time with people like Unicef arguing the pros and cons that this can have on children's learning and development (United Nations International Children's Education Fund, 2017). Furthermore, Kidron and Rudkin (2017) explains how the digital world that we now live in is a permanent thing and is a mandatory part of childhood for children living in the 21st century.

The list of activities that children can access through digital devices are many, through educational apps, audio books, google maps and many more, it is a chance for children to use their imagination and encourage them to look and explore things for themselves (Ruggiero, 2019). Chaudon (2015) also suggests that children's digital journey's help develop their creativity. Digital devices can help contribute to children's creativity and imagination in a few ways, for example when children are playing, they may use characters from their favourite video games to re-enact and bring a virtual world into their reality (Marsh, 2014). Gaming is popular with children now, even starting young with playing mobile games on their parents' phones, Plowman et al (2012) suggest that children can use digital devices such as mobile phones when they are playing, even if the mobile phone is just a prop in their imaginary game (Marsh, 2018). However, Strauss (2012) states that researchers have noticed a drop in creativity in children, especially children in the Early Years. It is believed to be partly because of the decrease in children playing outdoors.

Yet, The Foundation Phase has been encouraging children to learn through play, not only that but to have child-led play and activities (Wainwright et al, 2015). Donaldson (2015) also states that the curriculum will be focusing on educating children to be 'ambitious, capable learners' children who are creative, confident and independent. With this in mind it is clear that children are being encouraged to play more within their school environment. However, there is also the Play/active Learning scheme in Wales that supports children in play but also believes that 'Play/active learning should be an essential part of the children's curriculum' maybe more schools should look at implementing this into the curriculum (Welsh Assembly Government, 2008).

However, in a curriculum that is heavily play-based is promoting digital literacy a good idea? The importance of digital literacy is highlighted in the Successful Futures review, Donaldson (2015) states the importance of digital competence and literacy being as significant as numeracy and literacy. Digital competence plays a role in employability and with more of a focus on skills such as digital literacy it is the hope to help children with their future employability (Welsh Government, no date). However, as Wainwright et al (2015) explains The Foundation Phase in Wales as a play-based curriculum. The curriculum focuses on letting children learn and explore the outside world and learn in a more child-led method, but also teaching children the values of the outdoors. The National Wildlife Foundation (2017) found that most children spend on average around 8 hours a day on media devices, which is most of their free time. This would mean the only time they were not on them would be when they were eating dinner doing homework, showering or sleeping. TNWF (2017) came up with ways to integrate children's digital experiences into the outdoors, with educational apps or games that would encourage them to be outdoors. However, Moloney (No date) suggests that with all the different types of technology that are available to young children, they are often more distracted and are more unlikely to not focus when digital devices are around, so would the children be able to focus on these tasks if it involved technology.

Gill (2013) compares children's experiences to a diet. He explains that it is better to have a 'broad and balanced diet'. It is not healthy for children's well-being to not do something purely because it is risky but to make sure that there is a balance in their activities, that they are experiencing everything they can so that they can learn from it. The Foundation Phase encourages children to learn in more enjoyable and effective ways, giving children a broad way of learning through experiences, one of the main aims is that children 'have a flying start in life and the best possible basis for their future growth and development' (Welsh Government, 2015: 2).

Hague (2010) discusses how digital literacy is important for young children, it ensures they are prepared for their future and be an 'active part in social, cultural, economic, civic and intellectual life'. Pinola (no date) talks about how today is a technology filled world and the best way to combat that is to teach children to use technology in a healthy way, technology isn't necessarily the problem so we can integrate digital media into education and even the outdoors through schemes such as The National Wildlife Foundation (2017) but we need to consider how we do that.

Another subject to consider is whether or not parents/practitioners have enough digital knowledge and understanding to be able to support young children in learning. Vygotsky believed that children learn through a more knowledgeable other as they wish to understand the teaching being given to them (McLeod, 2007). This can be seen as a negative aspect to children's digital literacy experience, especially for parents, the task of looking at safeguarding children in a digital environment is a unique challenge to parents as most will reflect the parenting that they received as a child, it's a new experience for the parents so how can they know the correct methods to help their children (Lamberton et al, 2016; Kirdon and Rudkin, 2017). For young children in particular the role of the parent is important, it is their job to introduce their children and guide them in their use of digital media, parents need to be correctly guiding children in how to correctly and safely navigate digital media as role models and parents (Dias et al, 2016). Though it is not solely the parents responsibility and schools also support children with learning to be careful on digital devices, the Digital Competence Framework (2008:1) for the Foundation Phase states that one of their goals is for Children to 'use digital devices and media with care' to be able to handle each device appropriately.

However, risk is a part of children's learning experiences and contributes to their development (Thomson, 2014). It can help children to recognise dangers or risks, use their own common sense and help them to become more confident these are all positives when linking to their digital development (Early Education, no date). This could be linked to Kolb (1984) and his experiential learning model, where you learn from experiencing. If a child makes a mistake whilst on a digital device, they have time to reflect on what went wrong and how they can avoid that mistake happening again.

Kidron and Rudkin (2017:12) also state that research shows digitally literate children take more risks and come to less harm. However, Livingstone (2010) states that risk can have different outcomes depending on the child, and if a risk is discovered then it doesn't mean that something bad will follow up. Unicef (2017) also suggest that vulnerable children may be more susceptible to online risk than other children. Yolanda et al (2016) furthers this point by talking about how more children are vulnerable to online risks than others saying that toddlers with difficult temperaments or self-regulation problems could have a bigger chance of being at risk, however this is not just because of their personalities, it can also be linked to the fact that parents are more likely to give them a mobile device to calm them down.

As Unicef (2017) lists the digital risks that can occur can be things such as cyber bullying, grooming of children and violation of privacy, these are all serious matters to consider when children are accessing digital devices, which is why it is advised that young children need to be supervised by parents and practitioners while learning about the digital world. It is the concern of Wang et al (2005) that parental control of digital devices is more focused on screen-time than on what content children are looking at. Many parents have rules set on how often they can use digital devices for example often it's a method of motivating children to do homework for the promise of some screen-time afterward (Dias and Brito, 2016). Many parents use media as a distraction for their children sometimes, if it's to make dinner or for a few moments of quiet (Silverman, 2019). However, Kidron and Rudkin (2017) also go on to explain that the digital world wasn't made in the interests of children and there are many risks to allowing children to have free reign over devices and the media, and however hard parents, practitioners and teachers try it is often hard to ensure children's safety.

Is this encouraging children to have too much screen-time and forming bad future habits? According to Unicef (2017) many parents and practitioners have the worry that online experiences on digital devices is making children depressed and promoting obesity. Strauss (2012) states that the time children are spending on digital devices is taking away from the time they are spending outside, playing. Children are not playing as much as they used to.

However, Chaudon (2015: 12) states that there are still many unanswered questions when it comes to the consequences digital engagement can have for young children and their families but it is through how parents choose to control children's use of digital devices and what they allow them to access, it is proven by Chaudon (2015) in her study that children that have been introduced and guided in technology have had improved cognitive development. Donaldson (2015) disagrees with this in his thoughts that digital literacy helps prepare children for future employment. Hague (2010) also suggests that having a good knowledge and understanding of technology prepares children for the future, which is important in an ever-growing digital world.

In conclusion there are many risks that can come from digital media but there are ways that we can ensure children are using it correctly, so practitioners and parents can focus on teaching children to use technology in a healthy, balanced way. This way children can get the most of their digital devices, encouraging creativity, imagination, social skills, hand-eye coordination and educational provision for the future (Chaudon, 2015: 8). Through implementing the new

curriculum into schools, the use of digital literacy will become one of the three cross curricula subjects; literacy, numeracy and digital competence. Preparing children to future proof their education and encourage brain development through play-based learning (Donaldson, 2015).

Section 2: Safeguarding Children on Digital Media

The UK Safer Internet Centre (2017), which provides guidance on the importance of digital media explains that when it comes to digital media there can be some mixed messages. It's easy to just read the negatives about the internet and digital media as a whole, however what is really important to grasp here is that, it's ensuring

that you have the right amount of time on digital devices, the common phrase for this being 'Everything in moderation'. The goal of this leaflet is to inform you of ways that you can make digital media a safer place for you children and not to scare you away from it. Here are some clear pros and cons of children using digital media:

Pros according to the UK Safer Internet Centre (2017):

Hand-eye coordination – Children playing educational games and learning that clicking the right button will have the desired effect.

Problem Solving – There are many websites and games that help children to attempt to and learn to solve problems. The aspect of levelling up encourages them to keep going and gives them a feeling of accomplishment when they complete these tasks.

Access to information- usually a child can only learn through the more knowledgeable other around them, with the computer children learn that they have a huge amount of information at their fingertips. This encourages them to do research and to learn more.

Cons:

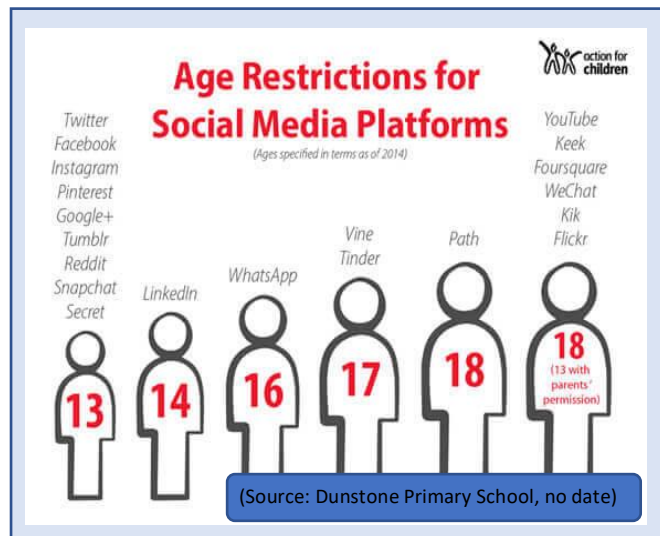
Addiction – The phrase once again 'everything in moderation' too much of anything is not good for us. (UK safer Internet Centre, 2017).

Being exposed to unwanted experiences online

– According to Ofcom (2019) who reviews and collects data on children's digital uses, many children see content online that they find disturbing or unpleasant.

Cyberbullying – According to the Welsh Government (2011) with technology use on a constant rise and more children using mobile phones cyberbullying is also becoming more common.

Talking to your child and finding out what social medias they are using can be very helpful in helping to make your child's media experience safer. Once you understand your child's media journey a little better you can prepare what kind of precautions you need to take. The age restrictions for social media look like this:



However, the age limits of the sites are not always policed by the sites in question, and there is no stopping your children from starting an account under a false age (Skills You Need, no date).

GET TALKING WITH YOUR CHILDREN

Action For Children (2018) give some really useful advice on monitoring and becoming a part of your children's social media experience.

- Ask your children what their favourite social media apps are and why. This way you can find out about the apps, join them and be able to keep track of your children's content and what they are posting.
- Be interested and invested in their journey, understand why they enjoy the apps they use and give them positive feedback on what they post, this will help them to feel accepted and safe. It will also allow you to monitor them and show them a safe way to manoeuvre socials (Action For Children, 2018). The Welsh Government (2011) explains how this is important to your children, for your children it's a social activity and in many ways the only way they can keep in contact with their friends, allowing them to feel more connected and accepted.
- Use it as an opportunity to discuss inspirations and emotions with them, do they understand the difference between jealousy and admiration, this way children can spend less time comparing themselves to other, especially unrealistic expectations such as celebrities. Having role models is much healthier and beneficial for them (Action For Children, 2018).
- All of the above encourages openness with your children, which will help them with their confidence and their individuality. Not only this but it shows the importance of conversations that do not occur behind a computer screen, tablet or phone. (Action For Children, 2018)

According to Childnet International (2018) these 'be SMART' rules are a great way to help educate your children about internet safety in a fun way!

SAFE – Internet safety is super important, keep your personal information safe, these are things such as your full name, passwords and where you live.

MEET – Never meet up with someone you met online even if you share mutual friends with them, people can pretend to be whoever they want through social media and if someone is asking you for personal details then you should inform your parents.

ACCEPTING – Remember that not all websites are safe some contain viruses or disturbing images. Always consider on what you are clicking on no matter who sent it to you.

RELIABLE – Remember that not all information you read online is from a reliable source, if you have accessed some information then look for three other sources or more to confirm the truth. You can also ask people around you or go and check in books from your local library.

TELL – Always talk to an adult about your online journey, share your experiences with an adult especially if something makes you feel uncomfortable or nervous

The importance of privacy settings:

The Gov.uk (no date) website states that it is important to remember that it is impossible to have 100% safety when it comes to the internet and using digital devices. But there are certain precautions you can take starting with monitoring privacy settings on your children's devices and apps. However, there are still ways around privacy settings so it is always important to continue to talk about the consequences social media can have. The practical guide setup by Gov.uk suggests a few options that may help protect your children.

- *Show them how to use their privacy settings, this way only the child's approved friends can see post that they make and it's harder for people to find out information about them.*
- *Check apps for 'Geo-location' for example snapchat has a feature when it shows the users location, this has to be turned off via settings. Many users or children maybe sharing their locations unintentionally.*
- *Make sure that your child's identity is hidden if others share their content.*

The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC, no date) explains about parental control. Parental control can help stop:

- *Purchases online or in game and apps*
- *Inappropriate content*
- *Manage the content that your family members are using.*

Most parental control software needs installing, this can be done on all devices, so it is important you remember to do it all on digital devices. This way you can plan safely around your children's content and even usage of devices, for example you can put a timer on how much screen time they are allowed a day.

For more information on parental controls visit the NSPCC site 'what are parental controls?' at: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/parental-controls/>

A solution to your privacy concerns:

Hector the safety dolphin is a fun way to help protect children on the internet. The early years is the most important time for children to learn about internet safety, it is the aim of Hector's World to help children mature as confident digital citizens.



If something comes up that the child feels uncomfortable with the child can click on the dolphin and it will cover the entire screen. This is something both teachers and parents can use. It also comes with animated episodes to help inform children, teachers and parents on safety. (Hector's World, no date) (Dunstone Primary School, no date) (Esafety Commissioner, 2019)

Source: (Dunstone Primary School, no date)

Useful sites for information:

Ofcom. (2020) 'Children and parents: Media use and attitudes report 2019'

https://www.ofcom.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0023/190616/children-media-use-attitudes-2019-report.pdf

Action For Children. (2018) 'Self-esteem in the age of social-media'

<https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/news-and-blogs/parenting-tips/2018/july/self-esteem-in-the-age-of-social-media>

Activity Plan		
Activity: Digital art using Microsoft paint		
Number of children: 6	Age of children: 4-5	Number of adults: 2
Location: school	Preparation time: 0	Activity time: 30 mins
Resources: School computers or tablets, depending on the school facilities.		
Aim/s of activity: Learn to use Microsoft paint to draw pictures and differentiate between brushes and tools. For children to make a link to emotions, to be able to see emotions in other children and have an understanding of how they feel.		
Links to outcomes: Identify emotions of others on a range of digital software, e.g. talk about feelings and begin to recognise emotions; consider how actions and words can affect others; realise that behaviour has consequences; identify when they are angry, worried or frightened and know who to ask for help (Digital Competence Framework, 2018).		
Differentiation: Children draw one another and try to recognize the emotion of the child they are drawing, afterward we can discuss if the emotion was correct and why they thought that the child felt this emotion.		
Role of adult/adults: To explain the activity in a clear way, so that the children can easily understand what they are supposed to do. To monitor children and guide them using Microsoft paint if needed, if not then it's important that the adults stay out of it and let the creativity of the children flow.		
The activity: Children draw themselves on Microsoft paint showing in their expression how they are feeling. After they have completed the drawings they will be passed to different students around the room. The students will then be questioned on what emotion they think is being displayed in the drawing, the child that drew the picture will confirm if they are correct and why they drew that emotion. If there is time left after this is done, then the children are free to draw whatever they want on Microsoft paint.		

Section 4 – Critically analysing the classroom activity

My activity is based around children getting a grasp at using paint to draw digitally, however it is also about them being able to recognise those around them as being their friends, to recognise themselves and to also determine emotions and the feelings of the people around them. The Digital Competence Framework (2020) in the Citizenship strand states that:

With increasing independence learners are able to: identify emotions of others on a range of digital software, e.g. talk about feelings and begin to recognise emotions; consider how actions and words can affect others; realise that behaviour has consequences; identify when they are angry worried or frightened and know who to ask for help. Give reasons for likes/dislikes of on-screen activities.

After the children have drawn their pictures the next part of the task is to talk about emotions and their feelings. When children learn about their emotions it can help them to make friends around them, they are more understanding of others. It is also said that children with better emotional intelligence are better at paying attention in class (Raver et al 2007; Eggum et al. 2011).

When children can express their emotions then they are more likely to be able to share these emotions with a practitioner or parent. For example, if a child is being bullied and is feeling angry, then instead of acting out the child can explain what is happening and then a practitioner or parent can deal with the situation (Tominey et al, 2017). It is my hope through this activity that it will develop the children's emotional intelligence by being able to discuss theirs and others, feelings and emotions. This could also be linked to the new curriculum where it is the aim to encourage 'ethical, informed citizens' discussing emotions and feelings in the class could help in the understanding that what they do has an effect on the people around them. If they do something mean they it could make someone sad, if the child understands what it's like to feel sad then they can feel compassion for others (Donaldson, 2015; Tomoney et al, 2017).

A way this activity could be adapted to better fit this strand of The Digital Competence Framework is perhaps have a session after the activity where the children are asked if they enjoyed the activity and why- this could link to 'Give reasons for likes/dislikes' quoted above. In the Producing strand of The Digital Competence Framework (2020) it states 'Describe in response to questions some of what has been done in the task' this could link to the latter part of the activity where children are asked to explain the emotions on their drawings, it could also link to the suggestion of asking children what they thought of the activity once it was

completed. This links to the health and well-being section of the Successful Futures review (Donaldson, 2015) where it talks about children experiencing social, emotional and physical well-being. The department for Education and skills (2005) also says that a child's ability to understand the emotional intelligence is dependent on the steps we take to teach them this. We can't just expect children to learn this without teaching them.

Some issues that could occur with this activity are the facilities of the school, are there enough computers or tablets for all children to have access to one, this could make it difficult to achieve the expectations of DCF, however in the DCF questions answered report (2016) they say that school settings can work with their local authorities to get a 'ICT replacement programme' in place. It could also be arranged for children to do the activity from home on a tablet or PC, however not all children have access to digital devices either (Chaudron, 2015). This could lead to a few problems like not all children have the same knowledge of how to navigate digital devices and feeling inferior to others. Walker (2019) talks about how poorer children tend to fall behind when it comes to learning, and that a lot of homework requires them to have access to the internet which not all children living in poverty can access. However, Chaudron (2015) explains that most children have a basic knowledge in operating most digital devices, especially devices with touch screen even when they don't have regular access to these devices. Therefore, I think the best place for this activity to take place is within the school, where children have fair access to devices.

The Early Years Foundation Phase (2017) focuses on children led activities, the importance of play and the outdoors, is this activity encouraging children to be inside? If the activity was done on ipads/tablets then it is possible for children to sit outside in the shade and complete this task, this way we would be achieving promoting digital competence and the importance of the outdoors (Donaldson, 2015). However, as an activity it is not child-led, according to The Key for School Leaders (2017) A more child-led activity would be the children deciding what they wanted to draw.

How could we adapt this activity to favour children with ALN? According to Unicef (2017) some children with ALN thrive when it comes to technologies saying that it's a chance for them to show off their abilities and not think about their disabilities. Salvatore (2017) talks about how useful it is to talk about emotions and expressing them with children that have Autism, you can teach them to read facial expressions. For other children this could be an easy thing they would do without thinking but it can be difficult for children with autism to learn.

Maybe to adapt this task a little more we could also get the children to act out the emotion they drew so they would also be expressing it through body language. Donaldson (2015) states that all children have to learn and make progress along the same path, regardless of any ALN, this small change to the activity would mean that all children could benefit.

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