The Portuguese programme ‘one laptop per child’ and its impact on families: a study on parents’ and children’s perspectives

# Details

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* Social mediation
* Internet usage, practices and engagement
* Literacy and skills
* Access, inequalities and vulnerabilities
* Other

## Sample

The sample was selected from the population comprising the 3rd and 4th grade students
attending the 1st cycle schools in the municipality of Braga (Portugal). A total of 32 schools (out of the existing 72) participated in the study, with the final sample consisting of 1517 3rd and 4th grade students (out of a population of 3584), and 1264 parents and guardians.

## Implications For Parents About

Parental practices / parental mediation

## Implications For Educators About

STEM Education

## Implications For Policy Makers About

Other

## Other PolicyMaker Implication

encourage training that aims to develop the digital literacies of school students

# Abstract

This paper intends to present and reflect upon some of the findings emerging from a research project entitled “Navigating with ‘Magalhães’: Study on the Impact of Digital Media on Schoolchildren” that was conducted at the Communication and Society Research Centre at the University of Minho, Braga, Portugal. The project focused on the politics of the governmental programme “One Laptop per Child” part of the Portuguese Technological Plan for Education, and the uses of the “Magalhães” computer, and other media, by children aged 8-10 years. This paper analyses the impact of this particular public policy on digital literacy of young children based mostly on the perspectives of parents and their modes of mediation. It also debates parents’ and children’s perspectives on parental rules on computer and Internet usage. It ends by concluding that the impact of this programme occurred mainly at the level of access rather than the social and educational uses and practices. It also highlights the importance of family in the way children access and use ICT.

# Outcome

“Athough ‘e.escolinha’ was presented as a programme for schools , there were some hesitations about considering it a family policy since it was meant to promote computer access not only to children but to their families as well. Despite being clearly focussed on the school context, the initiative did involve the children’s parents, not only because they would have to make the decision whether or not to purchase the computer, but they would also have an important role as technology mediators in the family context. Furthermore, since the children are still small and often form an opinion based on their own parents’ opinions, behaviour and attitudes, the families’ opinions would have a significant impact on the children’s opinions and perceptions of this governmental measure, particularly of the “Magalhães” computer and its benefits” (Pereira, S., 2016: 120-21).
“This study shows the importance of parents’ expectations regarding children’s use of media and digital technologies. (...) The computer and the Internet are undoubtedly the means parents most value both to be used by children and to possibly be worked on and discussed at school. This is connected with the fact that parents associate the use of the computer with academic performance and future success at work. (...) Thus, in parents’ point of view, using a computer is an important factor in both meeting and keeping pace with the demands of modern life. (...) In this study there were no significant discrepancies between parents’ and children’s discourses. The perceptions of both groups on access, uses and mediation strategies are very similar. This result may be connected with the children’s ages” (Pereira, S., 2016: 121).
“The results also suggest that children make more use of the computer at home than at school. Gaming appears to dominate the computer use of many children, contrary to what happens with school-related activities that are less frequent. With regard to the uses of and the practices with the computer, one can conclude that the ‘e.escolinha’ programme failed its objective of changing the teaching and learning process. Although it did have had some impact as far as access to technology is concerned, it did not reflect an ‘added value’ in terms of the uses and the competences to use the computer and the Internet. The parental mediation of children’s use of media and ICTs deserves also a note. Although this study focuses mainly on restrictive mediation strategies, the data analysis based on the children’s and parents’ answers, showed parents’ concern for supervising children’s activities on these means, which cannot be dissociated from the age of the children in question. That being so, it is important that this concern may lead to active parental mediation as a way to help children not only make the most of the media and the technologies and the opportunities they provide but also learn how to deal with the risks they may pose” (Pereira, S., 2016: 122).
“In terms of media literacy, the study has shown that there are many dimensions that could be improved. Dimensions such as critical understanding, critical evaluation, creating content and communication are marginal to the use that children make of technologies. Our understanding is that schools should help pupils to develop these skills, considering that is a lot more to do beyond the technical aspects and the use of the computer to write a text. Besides this, other important capacity that children should be encouraged to develop is a critical thinking about their engagement with ICT and about ICT itself” (Pereira, S., 2016: 122).