Digital Natives or Naïve Experts? Exploring how Norwegian children (aged 9-15) understand the Internet.

# Details

## Year

2018

## Issued

2018

## Language

English

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## Type

Short report

## Topics

* Learning
* Social mediation
* Internet usage, practices and engagement
* Literacy and skills
* Content-related issues
* Risks and harms
* Online safety and policy regulation

## Sample

Employing convenience sampling, we visited three schools and one regional science museum in Norway between 1 March and 6 April 2018. At these locations, we conducted qualitative observation and semi-structured interviews with children aged between 9 and 15.
In total we observed 235 children during 30 hours of instruction. We interviewed 141 of the children (53 male and 88 female), either individually or in groups of up to 5. Each interview lasted between 5 and 25 minutes. Over half of the children were aged between 9 and 11 years old.

## Implications For Educators About

Digital citizenship

# Abstract

In 2018, the Norwegian EU Kids Online team will implement a nationally representative survey to investigate how Norwegian children use the Internet. In preparation for this survey, a qualitative research project was implemented to explore how Norwegian children understand the Internet. We found that:
• While children were familiar with concepts that related to the Internet and associated technologies, they were not always able to practically implement the techniques that these concepts referred to.
• The children used a combination of technical concepts and more generic terms when talking about the Internet. They also both used and referred to the Internet in a range of multilingual
contexts.
• The children understood that their use of the Internet was regulated by various permissions and restrictions. However, the extent to which they accepted this regulation varied.
• When considering how to act in risky situations, the children’s deliberations were often context specific.
There is a gap between the extent to which children are familiar with concepts that relate to the Internet, and their ability to implement the practical skills these concepts refer to. They also lack a holistic understanding of the risks and opportunities that may be associated with their actions. This raises the question of how children can be supported to develop the skills they need to live good lives in a world that is increasingly mediated by the Internet (see also Livingstone, Mascheroni and Staksrud, 2017).

# Outcome

The results are presented according to five themes: 1. Technical Expertise; 2. Social Media; 3. YouTube; 4. Gaming Communities; and 5. Programming
Technical Expertise:
-The children are likely to assist their parents with problems encountered on the internet.
-"Positioning the children as experts seems to motivate them to engage with and learn how to use digital technologies" (Bhroin and Rehder, 2018, 6).
-Children struggle with file management. The concept of 'downloading' and transferring files was easily understood, however, it was the technique that the children most struggled with.
-Children also encountered problems related to the use of passwords to secure data and their personal devices. There were too many passwords for the children to remember as is described in the report: "In general, the children struggled to remember these different passwords. In one school, it took 45 minutes to start up one morning because the children had forgotten their passwords" (Bhroin and Rehder, 2018, 7).
Social media:
-64% of Norwegian children, at the age of 9-16, are reported to have at lease one social media profile.
-Children between the ages of 9 and 11, did not have a lot of experience using social media in the schools visited.
-"In general, these children understood a range of concepts related to using social media, for example ‘upload’, ‘download’, ‘share’, ‘friend request’, ‘post’ etc. However, their understanding of these concepts, and the appropriateness of the actions related to them, was quite context specific" (Bhroin and Rehder, 2018, 8).
-Most of the children know not to send photographs of themselves over the internet. But in some cases the children did not find it problematic to upload videos of themselves on social media.
-Children are aware of some of the risks that follow social media platforms.
Youtube:
-Almost all of the children in this report used Youtube, both at home and at school. Both girls and boys use Youtube to watch music videos, short films and Youtubers playing computer games.
-There was some confusion in terms of when the children were allowed to use Youtube.
-"Some children said that they were not allowed to use YouTube at school. Other children were under the impression that it was not a problem to watch YouTube when they had an allocated timeslot where they could freely use their iPads" (Bhroin and Rehder, 2018, 9).
-Children were aware of certain content restrictions and that it was based on a certain criteria.
-The teacher at one of the school explained that restrictions were connected to trigger-words, such as 'sex' or 'naked'.
Gaming communities:
-Some of the children participated in gaming communities, such as Roblox and Minecraft
-The children were not allowed to play shooting games at home
-Some of the children did not consider it problematic to interact with strangers in the gaming community.
Programming:
-The children were more familiar with applications like Scratch, Micro:bit and Sphero to code rather than the programming languages mentioned in the EU Kids Online Questionnaire (Java, Python and C++).
"The children we met lack a holistic understanding of the risks and opportunities that may be associated with their actions" (Bhroin and Rehder, 2018, 14).
Recommendations for the EU Kids online survey:
"With regard to the draft EU Kids Online survey and the specific concepts operationalised in that questionnaire, we recommend that ‘in app purchases’ and ‘pop up’ advertisements be explained and contextualised. We also recommend that the examples used to illustrate both gaming communities and programming languages be adjusted to include more current and relevant examples. In the case of gaming communities, Roblox, Fifa and Fortnite were used by the children that participated in our study. Scratch, Micro:bit and Sphero were examples of programming applications that the children were familiar with, and used to learn to code. They were less familiar with Python and Java, the examples currently listed in the questionnaire." (Bhroin and Rehder, 2018, 14).