Children under five and digital technologies: implications for early years pedagogy

# Details

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## Topics

## Sample

135 families who have at least 1 child under the age of five that attended a form of early years education from each of the four participating countries (Malta, Greece, Luxembourg and England).

## Implications For Educators About

Digital citizenship

## Implications For Policy Makers About

* High-quality content online for children and young people
* Stepping up awareness and empowerment
* Creating a safe environment for children online

# Abstract

This project aimed to investigate the types of digital technologies children under the age of five are using at home and assess the possible implications for early years pedagogy. The research, carried out between 2010 and 2012, was based in four European countries: England, Greece, Malta and Luxemburg. A mixed methods approach was employed to investigate what types of digital technologies were used by children under five years of age in their households and parental attitudes towards the use of these technologies. The project was developed into three stages. In the first instance data was collected from focus groups with the families to indicate what digital technologies are used in the households. In the second instance a questionnaire was designed for and completed by parents and children aged from birth to five years in order to reveal the extent to which children were making use of those technologies in the home. Subsequent to the analysis of the questionnaires, a further series of interviews were conducted with focus groups of parents and children to investigate their views in relation to the use of the digital technologies. Analysis of the data from the questionnaire revealed that children under five are heavy
users of a number of digital technologies at home. Analysis of the qualitative data emerging from the interviews suggested that children are ‘digitally fluent from a very young age’. One of the key findings was that parents felt that their definition of an illiterate person no longer corresponded to the traditional view of someone who cannot read and write, but rather was considered as a person who cannot learn, unlearn, relearn and use digital technologies as part of their everyday lives. Firstly, this project concluded, therefore, that there should be a re-conceptualisation of young children’s learning in early years pedagogy and early childhood settings as children under five are engaging with digital technologies in playing and learning at home and this cannot be overlooked by early years education. Secondly, it is suggested that in today’s world of digital technologies early years educators should re-examine the way children learn and the way in which the early years workforce organise their learning environments.

# Outcome

"Children under three interact with digital technologies and parents believe that digital technologies are like any other toys for them." (Palaiologou, 2016; p. 18).
"Analysis of the data from the questionnaire revealed that children under five are heavy
users of a number of digital technologies at home. Analysis of the qualitative data emerging from the interviews suggested that children are ‘digitally fluent from a very young age’. One of the key findings was that parents felt that their definition of an illiterate person no longer corresponded to the traditional view of someone who cannot read and write, but rather was considered as a person who cannot learn, unlearn, relearn and use digital technologies as part of their everyday lives." (Palaiologou, 2016; p. 5).
"This study has demonstrated that there are a rising number of children under the age of three who have access to all digital technologies, who use computers/laptops, digital tablets and the Internet. More than 60% of children under the age of three across all four countries interact with digital technologies, with 23% of those children jointly using televisions, computers and the Internet... #It was demonstrated in this study that 20% of children under three were able to multitask when they were using technology." (Palaiologou, 2016; p. 18).
"For parents the anxiety was coming from how to use the digital technologies in the best interests of their children, and they felt there were few places to turn for advice. The general consensus among parents was that there was confusion amongst educationalists in terms of how they can use the digital technologies and as such their attention had shifted toward
teaching their children responsible use and monitoring of the use of these media, rather than exclude them from their lives." (Palaiologou, 2016; p. 18).
"The project also showed that parents are anxious in terms of their children’s education. It was a strong feeling that whilst they do trust the teachers, they were no longer expecting the teacher to be the only one who teaches. They believed that learning comes from a constant dialogue between teachers and children, with technology playing a crucial role. Children and teachers are thus jointly responsible for the learning process which does not happen in isolation,... but the virtual learning environment to which children are exposed can become a platform for learning. Parents felt, however, that the role of digital technologies does not meet the structure of the learning environments in early years education. They stressed that there is ambiguity of opinions on how they must involved in a discussion on the role of technology in the early years education and the common key concern emerging from all four countries is... examining their own roles and positions to bring a balance to children’s digital fluencies and early years pedagogy." (Palaiologou, 2016; pp. 18-19).
More families from England (92%)and Luxembourg (92%) owned a computer, when compared to Greek (66%) and Maltese (68%) families, with very similar percentages for each family nationality reported for internet access.