Playing Digital Security: Youth Voices on their Digital Rights

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ABSTRACT

The United Nations (UN) Convention (1989) on the Rights of the Child changed the way children are viewed and treated worldwide. The Convention has been affecting governments, civil society and the private sector. ICT driven companies on the internet should not be an exception. According to Livingstone, Carr and Byrne (2015), Internet governance bodies have given little consideration and reflection to children’s rights. In this paper, it is proposed that in order for youth actively participate in an increasingly digital environment; they need to know better their rights to privacy and freedom of expression, among others. Although the understanding of the digital environments principles lies beyond the scope of average children’s school curricula, they can however play and discover simple technological concepts in the classroom. Thus, by early developing their literacy on digital identity management, they will be able to navigate, communicate, play and learn online more safely, achieving a responsible connected presence. A qualitative study on a visually oriented encrypted learning activity (game) among a group of students aged 16-18 years old, of the third cycle of Basic Vocational Education has been conducted with the following aims: a) to understand how knowledge about security technological processes can improve youth’s capability for managing their digital identities; b) to understand the value of pedagogies of play. Using participant observation, focus group and interviews, youth behaviours and attitudes towards this game based learning approach as well as their perceptions of their digital rights are presented.

KEYWORDS

Children Rights, Digital Security, Game Based Learning

INTRODUCTION

Media Literacy as a Matter of Children Rights

Human rights are inherent to all human beings, despite their age, gender, nationality, religion, language, or any other status. Human beings are all equal and their rights and freedoms are interrelated, interdependent and indivisible and derive from dignity and worth that are intrinsic to the human person (United Nations Human Rights Council [UNHRC], 1948). However, the definition of minor can vary upon country jurisdiction, being 18 the generally accepted age for majority, means that children are under the age of legal responsibility and competence and should not be treated in the same way as adults. Nevertheless, their rights are to be respected and protected (UN, 1989). The full rights of children are set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted

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by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989. Four general principles guide the rights of the child – the principle of non-discrimination on race, gender, sexual orientation, identity, nationality, religion, ethnicity, disability; the principle of protecting and acting on the best interest of the child as a primary consideration in all decisions that will affect children; the principle to equality of opportunities for all children to reach their full development; and the principle of considering the voice of the child that must be heard and respected in all matter concerning his/her rights (UN, 1989; UNICEF, 2009). The Convention changed the way children are treated worldwide. Children have rights and their views and voices are to be considered, being recognized as active participants in society. The Convention has been having a great impact in all fields of society leading to the need to adjust the world in guaranteeing the respect and protection for children’s rights (Lievens, 2011; Holloway, Green & Livingstone, 2013; Livingstone, 2013; Livingstone & Bulger, 2013).

There is a generalized consensus that “promoting and enhancing media literacy, for child and adult populations, is of growing importance, in a context of digital media convergence and a highly complex media and information ecology” (Livingstone, Bulger & Zaborowski, 2013). Despite students’ familiarity with the Internet and other technologies, young people may or may not have the necessary skills to access, analyze and evaluate the information or media available online (Hobbs, 2008). FraucMeigs, Flores, Tort & Velez (2014) state that core media and information skills include operational skills (including coding and computing), editorial skills (including multimedia writing–producing and mixing) and organisational skills (including navigating, sorting, filtering, evaluating) are central to media education in a digital age. Beyond its importance as an individual skill, media literacy opens social and cultural dialogue that emphasizes its plurality. People don’t create meanings individually, but as members of “interpretive communities” (Radway, 1988; Livingstone, Wijnen, Papaioannou, Costa & Grandio, 2013) where particular literacy practices evolve.

In this frame of thought the traditional literacy of reading, writing and arithmetic is not enough in an increasingly digital environment and multiple literacies should be framed in the Children rights or digital rights.

Multiliteracies or media literacy discussions pay more attention to processes of education and social uses. Yet, new and pressing issues arise in an ICT-driven economy with a complex socio-technical infrastructure (Livingstone, Wijnen, Papaioannou, Costa & Grandio, 2013). The simple activities of creating an account on the Internet and login, which are considered a commodity, require reflexive knowledge about digital identities management both in terms of digital footprints and basic security requirements. Although the understanding of the digital environments principles lie beyond the scope of average children’s school curricula, they can however play and discover simple technological concepts in formal or informal education that empower them to manage their digital identities as well to frame their identities protection as a matter of rights. However, up until now, what has been done to protect children in the digital environment?

Internet governance bodies have been using an “age-blind” (emphasis from authors) approach to users online, which,

...does not offer the possibility of understanding who is on the other side of the screen, more particularly, what age is that person, the main assumption being about their being adults. This ‘everyone’-based approach used online does not meet, respect or protect the rights of the children in a digital era (Livingstone, Carr & Byrne, 2015).

Lievens’ (2011) research offers a great contribution and added-value to the study of children’s rights online, as she managed to categorize into legal qualifications the online risks researchers have been identifying in the literature, offering a classification of (1) online risks, (2) their legal impact in the broader legal disciplines, which makes a direct link between communication field and the role of law, and (3) the role of the child (child as a recipient, as a participant and as an actor). As she explains, the role children play as active members in social networks sites (victims, creators, controllers, authors,
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