Evidence-based policy to promote children’s rights in a digital age: reflections on life outside the ivory tower

Sonia Livingstone, LSE
s.livingstone@lse.ac.uk
@Livingstone_S

ECREA Pre-conference, Lisbon, November 2014
Terms of engagement

Knowledge-driven model
Problem-solving model
Political/tactical models
Interactive model
Enlightenment model

As anyone working in the field of research use knows, a central irony is the only limited extent to which evidence advocates can themselves draw on a robust evidence base to support their convictions that greater evidence use will ultimately be beneficial to public services (Nutley, Walter, & Davies, 2007).
EU Kids Online aims to enhance knowledge of the experiences and practices of European children and parents regarding risky and safer use of the internet.

It aims to provide a rigorous evidence base to support stakeholders in efforts to maximize online opportunities while minimizing the risk of harm.

Three phases of work from 2006-2014.
EU Kids Online’s top 10 findings

1. The more children use the internet, the more digital skills they gain and the more they climb the ‘ladder of online opportunities’.

2. Not all internet use results in benefits, for these depend on their age, gender and socio-economic status, on how their parents support them, and on the positive content available to them.

3. Children’s use, skills and opportunities are also linked to online risks; the more of these, the more risk of harm; thus as internet use increases, greater efforts are needed to prevent risk increasing.

4. Not all risk results in harm, for this depends on their age, gender and socio-economic status, and also on their resilience and resources to cope with what happens on the internet.

5. Also important is the role played by parents, school and peers, along with national provision for regulation, content provision, cultural values and the education system.

6. Pornography tops children’s online concerns.

7. Violent, aggressive, cruel or gory content comes next.

8. What most upsets children is real/realistic rather than fictional violence, especially to the vulnerable.

9. Children’s concern about online risks rises markedly from 9 to 12 years old; younger children are more concerned about content risks; older ones about conduct and contact risks.

10. Children see video-sharing websites as most linked with violent, pornographic and other content risks.
Ways of working
Avoiding moral panics

Beaten up by Facebook bully

Boy, 14, sent attack video in hospital
by NICOLE LE MARIE

A TEENAGER beaten up by a bully outside his school gates was sent videos of the attack so he had to hospital.

Aki Johnson-Richards was filmed being punched and kicked in the head while leaving Nottingham Emmanuel School.

The 14-year-old who had been bullied had been sent a video showing himself being hit by a group of boys who were laughing at him.

He was taken to hospital and later told his mother, Sabina, 40, said: “He came home after the attack confused and in a state of shock.

The independent

Thousands of British children caught in web of online blackmail

Greece: The fight against fascism

The McPherson papers

Confessions of a rogue spin doctor

Thousands of British children caught in web of online blackmail

Overseas paedophiles target UK teenagers in fast-growing trend combining extortion, cyber-bullying and sex abuse

Generation Xbox

Health Half of Britain's seven-year-olds do not do enough exercise, according to new research.

The study, by University College London, of 6,500 primary pupils found the number playing sport has dropped to its lowest level for five years despite last year's Olympic Games.

Just 51 per cent of young children achieve the recommended hour of physical activity a day. Girls tend to be far less active than boys, with just 38 per cent doing that amount.

Carol Dessaneux, a senior author of the study, said there was a "yawning gap" between boys and girls. "We need to really think about how we are reaching out to girls. The school

Cyber-bullying now just a part of life, believe most children
The push for online child protection was perceived to be a threat to privacy and freedom of expression rights.

(Raboy & Shtern, 2010)

Online privacy, child safety, free speech and anonymity are on a collision course.

(Szoka & Thierer, 2009)
Listening to what bothers children online

When strangers message me on the internet, sex sites that open without me clicking on them. (boy, 10, Austria)

Violence against women and children and perverted humiliations and cruelty. (girl, 14, Germany)

Showing images of physical violence, torture and suicide images. (girl, 12, Slovenia)

Animal cruelty, adults hitting kids. (girl, 9, Denmark)

A mate showed me once a video about an execution. It was not fun, but insane. I get scared. (boy, 15, Sweden)

Propositions to meet from people whom I do not know. (boy, 12, Poland)

To take a photo of me without my knowledge and upload it to an inappropriate website. (girl, 10, Bulgaria)

See people having sex or naked people. (boy, 10, Portugal)

Facebook shows scary things even if you click on something that does not look or sound scary. (girl, 9, UK)

Scary things - I saw something at my friend’s house and I can’t get it out of my head. (boy, 11, Ireland)

I was shocked seeing a starving African child who was going to die and a condor waiting to eat him. (girl, 13, Turkey)

Those things that show other people’s suffering or torment as a funny thing. (boy, 14, Hungary)
Working with stakeholders
Life is complicated

There is nothing a Government hates more than to be well-informed; for it makes the process of arriving at decisions much more complicated and difficult.

(John Maynard Keynes, The Times, 11/3/1937)
Outcomes and impacts
The EU Kids Online Network: www.eukidsonline.net