ECREA PRE CONFERENCE

ECREA Temporary Working Group Children, Youth and Media
Researching children, youth and media – lessons from the field

12 November 2014   FCSH, Universidade NOVA de Lisboa, Lisboa/Portugal

Workshop 1: *How can research on children and media contribute to promoting children's well-being?*

Chair: Uwe Hasebrink, Germany

Bringing together different perspectives, considering children as
- Consumers
- Owners of rights
- Digital citizens

What follows are reflections on Working Group 1 by its Chair and Rapporteur: Ute Navidi (UK/Portugal)

Pre-conference Workshop 1 lived up to the promise of constituting a space for exchange of experiences and challenges related with children and media research.

WG1: Research and Policies

The overall question to be discussed was:

> **"How can research on children and media
> contribute to promoting children's well-being
> by informing and guiding policies in this area?"**

There were four presentations, which focused on main actors involved in this policy field, giving their particular perspectives

Brian O'Neill, Ireland	Politics regarding new governance-oriented policies
Stephan Dreyer, Germany	Institutions of youth protection regarding technical approaches (filtering and classification systems)
Pedro Goncalves, Portugal	ICT Coalition; Portugal Telecom on child protection
Veronica Donoso, Belgium	Industry players regarding positive content and the safer internet principles

Each 'impulse statement' was followed by questions to the presenters and discussion.
I tried to summarise some aspects of the presentations and my own thoughts under two headings: what are the most important achievements of research in this area, and the most important challenges/limitations which remain unresolved.

The final part of the workshop was devoted to participants making recommendations based on participants' experiences and on the workshop exchange, for the most urgent tasks on the future research agenda.

Altogether, the presentations and information exchange in WG1 demonstrated that academic researchers certainly have climbed out of the ivory tower and engaged with a range of stakeholders in wider debates using research evidence to make an impact and intersecting with policy.

They used their experiences for future research recommendations.

The most important achievements

- ✓ Through EU Kids Online we now have a typology of child users in different countries, and comparative data, relating to safer internet policies
- ✓ A comparative analysis of safer internet policies and a better understanding of internet safety arrangements at state level (how they address issues such as cyber-bullying, what is seen as offensive and (age-) appropriate/inappropriate; recommendations for legislation
- ✓ The European Commission (and possibly others) are very interested in such mapping
- ✓ Network members are involved
- ✓ Can make evidence-based recommendations
- ✓ Researchers now have some experience of influencing policy (cf Brian O'Neill)
- ✓ Seen as key independent partner in internet governance bodies (eg Internet Content Governance Advisory Group, Ireland, and elsewhere)
- ✓ Institutional collaboration is (sometimes) formalised
- ✓ There is youth involvement via Youth Forums etc, participating in a wide range of measures within the child policy framework
- ✓ Research on technology (tools, machines, metadata) sometimes takes into account children's rights (Stephan Dreyer)
- ✓ Various options exist for technological approaches
- ✓ Industry – eg via EU's ICT Coalition – has made some progress in terms of cooperation and with self-regulation, and developed a set of high-level principles (Pedro Goncalves)
- ✓ Industry want to provide safer services – to competitive advantage and protect reputation
- ✓ Industry involved in education and awareness raising
- ✓ "We are in the same boat"
- ✓ Collaboration with country's Safer Internet Centre (SIC)
- ✓ Research knowledge is reaching (Veronica Donoso)

The most important challenges/limitations

➢ Too little has been done better to protect and empower children – what can and should industry do eg regarding more positive content
➢ What are the drivers for researchers' involvement?
➢ What are the motivations of those seeking researchers' involvement?
➢ There is a gap with regard to monitoring and evaluation
➢ Are children and young people involved in meaningful ways?
➢ Bringing together 'big data' (regarding child protection) attempts to arrive at common and more consistent approach but how is it compatible with different cultures?
➢ Privacy and other rights of children may conflict with those of parents/carers
➢ How does research knowledge reach industry?
➢ How can we produce more 'industry-friendly' knowledge?
➢ How do industry partners resolve the contradiction internally, between accepting academic research knowledge, and the 'power' of their lawyers
➢ Continuity is often lost at political/policy level when there is a change of government; 'starting from afresh' with new people having to be brought up to speed; this takes time and effort
➢ Researchers' participation on wider bodies such as with industry is often not resourced

Recommendations for future research

In case academic researchers are worried about the future use of their skills, the following (non-exhaustive) list should reassure them:

☝ Listen to children – to what they say now (and recognise that children's experiences and views will change) – ask them what they need and want, what they perceive as risks and solutions
☝ Involve children's councils, panels, parliaments etc (children as involved citizens)
☝ Focus on developing expertise and resources for monitoring and evaluation
☝ Enhance transparency of legal communication – eg on gamification (and use gamification towards industry itself)
☝ Create new research foci and formulate new research questions
☝ Promote academics inside industry, occupy this space
☝ Collaborate with different industry sectors and develop new initiatives
☝ Multi-stakeholder groups
☝ Child protection is expensive
☝ Go for involvement in future ICT Principles development
☝ Train teachers no just in internet safety but in media literacy and related children's rights issues

- It would be useful to know which problems children and parents report to industry about what is unsafe etc; create access for academic researchers to relevant databases
- There is a need in general for greater technological awareness, pros and cons eg of issues such as blocking, filtering software, limitations of a technological approach to safety: children and parents should have a choice
- Explain difficulties to a wider audience
- How can technological developments take into account children's rights (socio-technological approaches)
- Explore how media literacy/safety can be incorporated into designs of new technological products – especially to protect the more vulnerable children
- Promote social media literacy in a wider sense; here academics have not had a great impact
- Can/should there be incentives to entice industry and for academics? 'Should we go down this road'? Maybe need to build better bridges between industry and academic researchers?
- Translate findings into industry-friendly language
- Promote and exploit the unique position/opportunities academic researchers have in that they are now somewhat closer to industry (in terms of a common quest to improve internet safety) but also – critically – that they have a *distance* from the interests of industry (in reality and in perceptions)
- Are existing parental control mechanisms effective?
- Find out what children can and want to control themselves