Children’s Use of Technology in the Home and in ECCE Settings

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Does ICT have a place in ECCE settings?

Parents

Educators
Participants
Online Survey
248 Parents & 172 Educators

- Mothers 89%
- Fathers 8%
- Grandparents 2%
- Carers 1%

Private - Full time
Community - Full time
Community - Part time
Community - Play group
Private - Sessional
Private - Sessional
Private - Part time
Context

Children of all ages are increasingly exposed to and becoming adept at using a variety of different technology and media. According to an ongoing study on digital childhoods, 81% of Irish children are now online with “with notable trends towards individualised, privatised and mobile forms of access to the internet”. 82% of teenagers and 35% of 9-12 year olds also have a social networking profile. In addition, Irish children spend at least one hour per day online and 75% of 15-16 year olds use the internet everyday (EU Kids Online, 2011). Very little, however, is known about very young children’s use of and engagement with technology and media. Yet with the prevalence of older children’s use of technology it is important to understand how ICT and media influence younger children’s everyday lives, development and education.
Aim

At Early Childhood Ireland we are interested in understanding the trends of children’s use of technology in early childhood care and education (ECCE) settings. In particular, we are interested in whether and how ECCE settings use ICT and media for educational purposes as well as for entertainment and communication purposes. With schools increasingly using ICT as part of their teaching but with research showing that Ireland is lacking behind its European neighbours in developing critical media literacy it is important to understand how ICT and media are used in different educational settings, including early childhood education, which increasing numbers of children are attending.
Does ICT have a place in ECCE?

Parents

Educators
Parents’ Thoughts on ICT for Young Children

Priorities for Their Children
Parents’ Thoughts on ICT for Young Children

ICT Uses in the Home

1. [Image 1]

2. [Image 2]

3. [Image 3]

4. [Image 4]

5. [Image 5]
Parents’ Thoughts on ICT for Young Children

Challenges and Worries

- Screen Time
- Communication
- Moderation
- Distraction
- Sedentary
- Digital Natives
- Eye Sight
- Solitary
- Virtual Babysitter
- Hyper Children
- Convenient
- Cyber Bullying
- Lazy Parents
- Overexposure
- Online Safety
- Play
- Lethargy
- Balance
- Aggressive
- Boundaries
- Family Time
- Overstimulated
- Cranky
- Imagination
- Withdrawn
- Tired
### Parents on ICT Use in ECCE Settings

| The majority of parents identify the **ages 3-4** as the earliest age at which children benefit from ICT | Parents worry about too much screen time / addiction to ICT | Most parents consider **ITC skills necessary** for children but **not in early childhood** | Parents want children to **learn through play**, not ICT, and want ICT to be used only as a learning tool, not ‘babysitting’ | 80% of parents think ICT should only be used for **very specific activities** in ECCE settings |
Educators’ Views on ICT for Young Children

No place in ECCE  

Useful learning tool
Educators’ Views on ICT for Young Children

• “Blocks and water play offer all the technology they require at age 3”
• “Let them play…”
• “ICT has no importance in preparing the child for school”
• “Children can benefit from ICT but need exposure to non-ICT items first to help them develop their imagination”
• “ICT allows for sedentary behaviour”
• “Limits creativity”
• “The more technology the worse social skills”

• Children overexposed at home
• Solitary
• Replaces interaction
• Inhibits development
• Some fears that ICT worsening/causing ADHD and behavioural issues
Educators’ Views on ICT for Young Children

Useful learning tool

• “It is the way forward so it should be allowed…”
• “It is a world of technology so children should become familiar as early as possible”
• “Need to acknowledge children’s interest and not create forbidden fruit”
• “Useful to bridge app gap”

• Easier to monitor and use educationally in ECCE settings compared to at home
• Should be used to complement curriculum, learning, particular themes and other work
• Means to an end, not an end in itself
• Should be set up in such a way that children collaborate on projects
• Needs to be planned and have thought going into it
Current Use of ICT in ECCE Settings

- Provide or would like to provide ICT: 66.00%
- Do not provide: 34.00%
Current Use of ICT in ECCE Settings

- No place in ECCE
- Overexposure at home
- Lack of resources

- Provide or would like to provide ICT 66.00%
- Do not provide 34.00%
Current Use of ICT in ECCE Settings

Provide or would like to provide ICT: 66.00%

Do not provide: 34.00%

Graph showing:
- Children enjoy it
- Parents expect/ want it
- It is part of the curriculum
- The children learn new things
- It keeps children occupied
- It entertains children
- It will help children later
- Children need it to be successful
Current Use of ICT in ECCE Settings

- Provide or would like to provide ICT: 66.00%
- Do not provide: 34.00%
Educators’ ICT Confidence
ICT Learning Tool Examples

Music and Movement

Geography
Cultural Awareness
Citizenship

Communication
For Educators

- Laptops/PCs
- Tablets
- Digital cameras / video camera
- Interactive whiteboards
- Touch screen toys
- Guidelines from DES (similar to those for primary schools)
- Training
- Additional funds / resources
Implications

• Parents and educators think children are over-exposed to ICT and call for balance

• The majority of parents’ worries primarily concern ICT behaviour associated with older children:
  • Online Safety
  • Cyber Bullying
  • Contents of video games
  • Screen time (easier to limit for young children)

• Many of the parents’ concerns are easily addressed in ECCE settings:
  • ICT as learning tool NOT virtual babysitter
  • Monitor programme contents
  • Supervise use
  • Optimise use to enhance development
  • Planned and purposeful use
  • Ensure balance
Recommendations

- Children’s use of ICT needs to be supervised and controlled.
- ICT in ECCE settings has to be integrated with / contribute to the curriculum.
- ECCE settings need to collaborate with parents in use of ICT.
- Educators need sufficient training and resource to optimise use of ICT.
- ICT primarily appropriate in pre-school rooms, NOT in baby/wobbler rooms.
Next Steps

• ICT and children with additional needs

• Case studies of ECCE settings with positive experiences of ICT use with children

• Further research into how ICT can be optimised for ECCE settings

• Design of training and resource portfolio