PUTTING THE NET IN PLACE- HOW DO SCHOOLS PROMOTE INTERNET SAFETY?

BY

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Contents

Statement of own work

I hereby confirm that I have acknowledged all sources of information and help that I have received, and where such acknowledgement is not made, the work is my own.

Signature: _____

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Abstract

This research report explores the promotion of internet safety in three Primary Schools as childrens use of the internet is associated with risks and high levels of concerns. Ethical approval was given for this study by Newman University prior to conducting the research. A case study approach was adopted following the interpretive paradigm, using mixed methods for collection of data, using semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire. This research was supported by three key questions; exploring the strategies used to promote internet safety, how children are involved in the process and finally the involvement of parents or carers.

Through purposive sampling, the Deputy Head Teachers, Computing Co-ordinators and a Year 3 Class Teacher from two schools participated in this research. In addition to this a trained Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) ambassador who was also a Computing Co-ordinator was invited to be involved in a semi-structured interview from a third setting. To explore the implementation of internet safety rules between the school and home environment, a questionnaire was distributed to the parents with a child in Year 3 at two of the schools.

The findings indicated that schools implement the use of filters, and promote the 'SMART' rules as an ongoing process for online safety within school, with more attention given to this aspect of learning during the week in which Safer Internet Day falls. Schools working with parents to support them as partners in ensuring childrens safety in the online world, highlighted a difference in teachers assumptions of parental levels of concern for their childs online activities, since teachers often had a different outlook on parental mediation at home.

Key words:

Internet; e-safety; children; parents; strategies; primary school

Introduction

This chapter will provide some contextual information about the study. It will briefly include details about the research methods that were used with justifications for these approaches.

Technology is increasingly a central feature of children's learning. The Primary National Curriculum sets out clearly that the aim of pupils being taught computing is to support them to become 'digitally literate' and to help them for when they enter the workplace and to be prepared as active participants in the digital world (Department for Education, 2013, p.178). In relation to policy, the issue of internet safety has recently been highlighted by the Department for Education, (2015) through a recommendation for schools to continue their duty to support online safeguarding, in addition to more robust practices, in partnership with parents and stakeholders including CEOP and the UK's Council for Child Internet Safety so that childrens online safety is promoted.

In relation to education, schools provide children with access to computers and devices to support and enhance their learning experience. It is an area of research that was interesting to explore as young children today are being described as 'digital natives', 'i-generation' and 'net kids', (Prensky, 2010, p.64 and Dixon, 2013, p.159). Children from as young as the age of two are able to independently use digital media, according to Katz (2015, p.30) and access the internet which is defined by Selwyn (2011, p.95) as a 'free environment' accessible worldwide through digital

technologies whereby individuals are able to connect and create content. It is important to note that definitions for the internet vary according to the context in which it is discussed but for the purposes of this research this definition was thought to be appropriate in relation to young childrens access to the internet. This study used the terms 'e-safety' and 'internet safety' interchangeably to relate to the use of technologies with access to the internet or virtual world responsibly in terms of young users being able to navigate around the potentially harmful content children can be exposed to in the online world.

In the broader social context, media stories often convey anxieties associated with children being vulnerable and victims of online perpetrators of abuse, or accessing unsuitable material (Livingstone, 2009, p.151). In light of this, it was thought it would be interesting to explore the approach Primary Schools take to teaching children how to remain safe when using the internet, since 'critical digital literacy' is crucial for children to understand that their online choices can have consequences (Selwyn, 2011, p.134). According to Livingstone and Haddon (2009, p.230) digital literacy consists of children being able to embrace the new and exciting opportunities the internet brings, whilst having the knowledge of how to be safe digital citizens.

For those adults who work with children and have a duty to safeguard them, it is essential that children are supported and understand how they can protect themselves from harm in a space which can be difficult for adults to monitor (Giant, 2013, p.14). The risks which children can face in the physical world such as contact with strangers and access to adult content can be prevented through restrictions,

however in the online world risks of this type are difficult for adults to monitor, so it is vital children from a young age are introduced to online safety (Byron, 2008, p.3).

Parallel to this discourse it is argued that children often have more understanding of the internet and the skills needed to operate technological devices than adults thus creating a digital divide between generations which could potentially leave children open to harm (Byron, 2008). Despite the fact children are growing up in a technology immersed era, as Prensky (2010, p.64) states children are perceived to be the more skillful users of the internet, there continues to be aspects of their use of technologies for which adults have a responsibility to provide.

The broad aim of this research was to explore how Primary Schools promote internet safety. This was supported by three subsidiary questions, firstly asking 'what strategies are used within schools to encourage internet safety?' The second question asked 'how children are involved in these processes?' And finally to explore the extent to which families are involved a third subsidiary question was formed to ask 'how are parents/carers are involved?' It was considered that exploring the relationship between the schools and parents in promoting e-safety was crucial since Haddon and Livingstone (2012, p.69) highlighted that 95% of children in the United Kingdom (UK) have internet access at home, therefore understanding if the perceptions and approaches to internet safety varied between home and school would be worth exploring.

This research was conducted as part of an Early Childhood Education and Care Undergraduate Degree, so the focus was primarily based on how safe use of the internet is encouraged for children in Year 3. Three Primary Schools located in the Dudley Borough participated in this study, as this enabled the researcher to compare the different approaches used to promote e-safety. From two of the settings, the Computing Co-ordinator, Deputy Head and a Year 3 class teacher were invited to take part in a semi structured interview to explore their role in relation to influencing the schools internet safety. Parents of children with a child in Year 3 were invited to participate through the use of a questionnaire. A third school was recruited, where a CEOP trained ambassador worked as a Computing Co-ordinator in order to offer an alternative position.

In consideration of the notion of internet safety being a socially constructed concept, an interpretivist, case study approach was adopted since this is suited to the exploration of people's beliefs and perceptions (Mukherji and Albon 2009, p.23). Mixed methods were used; through semi structured interviews the researcher was able to gather a vast amount of qualitative detailed information exploring the perspectives of different schools, combined with questionnaire data from parents, which was then thematically analysed to form a discussion of the approaches taken to support children with using the internet responsibly.

In summary this chapter has briefly outlined the reasons for this research, illustrating the broader view of internet safety and detailing the main and subsidiary research questions. Justifications have been given for the research methods that were used to

collect data. The following chapter explores existing research, identifying recurrent themes.

Literature review

Introduction

Before conducting research an in depth review of existing research according to Oliver (2012, p.5) is useful to understand the issues of the topic being researched in a broad context in order to be able to construct a research study aiming to address areas of uncertainty, whilst analysing approaches that were taken in previous studies to formulate detailed findings. Two distinct areas that were identified through reviewing research in the area of internet safety were firstly the crucial role that schools have in promoting internet safety within the confinements of the school environment, and secondly the digital divide between children and parents which can sometimes leave parents feeling helpless to effectively protect their children from the risks of the online world.

Technology is becoming a vital part in daily living for most people. A report by Holloway, Green and Livingstone (2013, p.8) focusing on internet use by 0-8 year olds highlighted that there is a growing trend as 87% of 5-7 year olds were using the internet; an increase from 68% during 2007 in the UK. The report states that one third of 3-4 year old children in the UK are using devices with internet access. This exposure to technology for children is creating an era of young people filled with 'technophillia' growing with advanced technological awareness and skills. Prensky (2001) introduced the term 'digital natives' to describe the generational gap related to the comfort and awareness of technology.

Rapid developments of technology and the accessibility to the internet by young children has resulted in major social moral panics around the protection of children

as the media has contributed to a growing concern that children are no longer safe within the confinements of their own home. Cohen (1987) acknowledged that moral panics are created through exaggerated levels of concern with regards to a new phenomenon, illustrating a threat to the existing structures in society. Cohen-Amalgamor (2015,p.64) relates this to the scare stories from the media that highlight possible risks related to the internet and although they are certainly of concern, particularly for vulnerable users it is important to put this into perspective and have facts and real life experiences to address the likelihood of the fears occurring. The growing concern surrounding the risks of the internet resulted in the publication of the review by Byron (2008) commissioned by the New Labour government to explore these risks and children's online participation; it is significant to note that alongside the risks the virtual world also involves benefits and opportunities, however this report was conducted mainly to focus on the dangers.

Internet access in school environments

It has been recognised that previous research, focusing on children's use of the internet has largely drawn upon the role of the school in ensuring that children are supported with being safe, digitally literate users of the internet. Sharples et al (2009) explored the use of social networking and recreational use of the internet for children aged 11-16. Through the use of surveys and reports they highlighted the attitudes of the children, their teachers and parents towards internet safety. It was emphasized in the research that children are a vulnerable group in society, needing protection from the adults around them, (Sharples et al, 2009, p.71). As the internet is a medium in which children are the more knowledgeable, this alters the typical

notion of the adults being responsible for the protection of children, as Clarke (2010, p.115) and Livingstone (2009, p.10) state that the increase in the use of technologies by children, makes them vulnerable to risks that adults are not always confident with addressing due to the lack of understanding and skills. This subsequently results in the power balance between adult and child relationships being reversed creating fear for what could potentially happen if children are to circumnavigate their way around adult boundaries. With relation to the school environment, Dixon (2013, p.165) suggests that this notion also applies to teachers and pupils whereby the pupils are perceived to be better equipped with knowledge about technology and the opportunities in the virtual world.

Hope (2008) explored the potential dangers online and discussed school responses for ensuring that risks are prevented within school access to the internet. Using relevant school policies, non- participant observations and semi structured interviews, Hope (2008, p.105) was able to form a whole school approach to online safety and since the study involved a range of educational settings; two primary schools, two secondary schools, three secondary schools with sixth form provision and a post sixteen college. It could be suggested that since the research involved a broad range of ages it helped the researcher to gain an understanding of how age would be a factor in online activity and attitudes.

Hope (2008, p.107) also illustrates the image of children needing supervision and protection, stating that content on the internet, particularly pornography can contaminate and corrupt young minds. This notion relates to Rousseau's (1762) ideas of children being vulnerable and innocent with the potential to be corrupted by society, (Johnston and Nahmad- Williams, 2009, p.17). The romantic discourse by

Rousseau (1762) according to Kehily (2009, p.5) suggested since children are innocent beings in need of protection, adults hold a responsibility to form an environment in which children are protected from risks and harm. In the context of the online world, this could be perceived to be a virtual space where adults may not have the understanding of how to safeguard children.

A parliamentary inquiry into online child protection highlighted that adults working with children and parents were particularly concerned about the relatively easy access to online pornography by children, both deliberately and through accidental searching for other material, (Perry 2012, p.13).

In relation to childrens understanding of online safety, Cranmer, Selwyn and Potter (2009) researched primary pupils understanding of managing risks and promoting their safety while using daily technologies. Through the use of a survey and group interviews with Key Stage 2 pupils they found that childrens responses from the survey were very different when open ended questions were asked, as this gave them the opportunity to elaborate on their thoughts. It was highlighted those children in upper Key Stage 2 seemed to have more awareness of e-safety through the same perception as adults and official views of e-safety. Children aged 7 illustrated that it was a poorly understood, abstract concept through their discussions of dangers involving information communication technologies they linked dangers and risks to aspects such as spilling water on the devices or accidentally deleting files, (Cranmer, Selwyn and Potter, 2009, p.139).

Hope (2008, p.108) and Sharples et al (2009, p.78) recognise that the most popular strategy used within schools to prevent pupils accessing sites which are not suitable

was to install filtering or blocking software on school computers. From a sample of eight settings ranging from primary schools through to sixth form colleges, Hope (2008, p.108) found that this service was used in all the settings with provision from the internet service providers, however it was in some aspects a barrier when pupils needed to use the internet for academic purposes, and as a result of the software, key restricted words would prohibit the researching of certain topics such as gender for science. Likewise, the ICT Teacher and pupils participating in the study by Sharples et al (2009, p.78) echo the fact that since blocking is mainly done by the local authorities' internet service providers, genuine opportunities for learning can be lost.

On the other hand, where the discussions are based around children's access to unsuitable material, it is well recognised that their advanced understanding of how to manipulate the barriers enables them to reach proxy bypass sites thus over riding the filtering in place for their protection (Hope 2008, p.109; Sharples et al 2009, p.78). It is crucial to note that these studies were done with older children so it is likely they would have more opportunities to access computers within schools. This strategy was noted by the panel members of teachers within the study by Sharples et al (2009, p.83) as being ideal for younger children to create a 'walled garden' for protection from the risks of the virtual world. However it could be suggested that although children are protected from the online risks through filters, this only addresses the issues at a micro level, with little importance placed on helping children to learn right from wrong. Statutory guidance from the Department for Education (2015, p.17) places a duty on schools to make use of internet safety filters and embed general awareness of online safety. However, it is poignant to note that

no one strategy can guarantee that children will not come across unsuitable material online, with the discussion of filters or blocks used at either home or school, they also can be counter effective because whilst they will ensure that obvious sites such as pornographic, body image and social networking sites are banned they can also filter out keywords that could be used for genuine learning. Moreover, this is a strategy that is largely based around adult control, thus preventing children from becoming resilient users of the internet (Katz, 2015, p.204).

Parents perceptions

Findings from a large scale European study by Haddon et al (2012, p.69) found that 95% of children in the UK go online at home, in comparison to the European average of 87%. An exploration of existing research relating to parental views found that the majority of in depth studies focusing on the use of the internet at home have been conducted overseas, however where it has been possible to analyse views of British parents, the research stems from government led research. Children's online activities at home are regularly highlighted as a great concern for parents, mainly due to the fact that this is an area where the norm of adults being more knowledgeable than children is reversed as they become naive learners, and often feel the disadvantage of not having regular exposure to the technologies that children in contemporary society will experience, (Byron 2008, p.45; Facer 2012, p.401; Perry 2012, p.5)

It would seem that there are common reoccurring concerns parents have with regards to their children being online; these have been split into categories of 'conduct' such as the child being a perpetrator of cyber bullying, distributing material

online, harming their social image and also the possibility of downloading virus malware onto devices. In terms of 'content' parents fear sites that encourage children to self-harm or portray certain body images and pornography and the possibility of 'contact' with strangers who could potentially harm, and their child being a victim of cyber bullying were most popular (Boyd and Hargittai 2013, p.253; ofcom 2014, p.139; Perry 2012, p.14 and Vitalaki et al 2012, p.130), interestingly levels of concerns vary for the age of their child, increasing with age.

It has been identified that parents concerns and reactions are influenced by their background. This is demonstrated through a study by Boyd and Hargittai (2013, p.261) who surveyed parents online, with a particular focus on only one child within the family between the ages of ten and fourteen. However, the research report suggests that some questions required the respondents to consider all the children when discussing actual experiences that had occurred; implying there were some discrepancies within the survey. This research specifically excluded parents who worked in the software sector; this could have been a strategic method as they would possibly have had more awareness of how to prevent children from risks online which in turn could have affected the validity and reliability of the findings. Nonetheless from the parents that participated there is a suggestion by Boyd and Hargittai (2013, p.256) that families from a non-affluent background fear more that their child could be a victim of cyber bullying, it is questionable whether this is influenced by social stigmas, that relate to families whereby the parents are unemployed or on low income and are demonized by the media.

The digital divide often means that children are the more sophisticated users of the internet. Research conducted by Vitalaki et al (2012, p.132) found that levels of

concern were influenced by technological competency of parents, suggesting confidence with technology can affect their readiness to mediate and support children's internet use. This study also adopted the use of surveys to explore attitudes, but in comparison to the study by Boyd and Hargittai (2013) there was not a focus on the experiences with one specific child. However Vitalaki et al (2012) recruited participants from varied areas thus it could be suggested that the findings are generalizable; although this was a Greek based study so only some aspects and principals could be applied to a UK context due to differences in culture. According to Vitalaki et al (2012, p.132) there was a substantial amount of parents lacking confidence to support responsible internet use, although those who regularly use the internet themselves felt they could effectively mediate and monitor internet use at home. Interestingly the research conducted by Sharples et al (2009, p.83) shows a contradiction as parents feel that they are adequately positioned to ensure safety of the children using the internet by having measures in place in the home environment; whilst also stating that they feel their children have more advanced skills and understanding of the technology (Sharples et al 2009, p.79).

Equally Duerager and Livingstone (no date, p.2) analysed findings from the EU Kids online survey and found that parents from higher social economic backgrounds were less likely to restrict internet use for their children than families with lower socio economic status, but more likely to adopt active mediation methods such as talking to their child about safety on the internet. Within the UK, 80% of parents of children ages three to four years in 2014 felt that they had the awareness to support their child online; a drop from 88% in the previous year (ofcom 2014, p.136). It is significant to note that these figures were greatly reduced for parents of older

children, illustrating that as children grow older and become more active online, their parents lack the ability to be able to protect and supervise. More importantly the focus of this survey was altered to explore the use of media at home and elsewhere rather than just within the home (ofcom 2014, p.123) it could reflect the changing nature of the mobility of the virtual world. Ofcom (2014, p.9) reported on parental concerns of the online risks increasing from 2013, possibly due to the fact that the internet can now be accessed on more mobile devices, suggesting that parents are supervising less.

Provision by schools to support parents is an essential aspect of promoting internet safety in order to ensure that both parties are supporting childrens online activities. The Office for Standards in Education, Childrens Services and Skills (2014) (Ofsted) introduced their specification for inspecting the provision of e-safety in schools. It was outlined that a whole school, consistent approach must be adopted with contributions from parents, the wider community and pupils. Following this the London Grid for Learning (no date) recommended that parents can be engaged through sessions at school briefings, and including guidance on school websites is a form of effectively communicating with parents how they can promote the safe use of the internet. Vitalaki et al (2012, p.133) concluded from their research that parents technological competency has a significant impact upon their understanding of online risks how to prevent them, thus it was suggested that schools could create opportunities to invite parents and help to raise their understanding and in turn their capacity to support children at home. Away from the discussion of internet safety, good communication and relationships between schools and teachers are essential to support childrens learning in any aspect of education, however external

commitments for barriers can often pose an issue such as work hours which can prevent parents from engaging in these opportunities, (Hornby, 2011, p.13).

Summary

From reviewing existing research it was found that the rapid pace of accessing the virtual world and the increasing use of it which brings forth benefits as well as risks is creating an illusion of parents being powerless. In relation to what schools can do to promote e-safety Sharples et al (2009, p.83) highlighted that is there is growing use of the internet by children and there is little confidence from the teachers with their ability to support children on how to effectively manage the risks, mainly due to the fact that local authorities have compulsory bans on particular sites such as social media, pornography and keywords for internet access provided to schools, thus making it a difficult process for teachers. Moreover the review by Byron (2008, p.128) emphasises greatly the need to create a bridge with parents and children in order to address the digital divide. The main strategy to do this would be through schools working together to embed the safe use of the internet with in the curriculum as part of personal, social and emotional education and computing lessons.

It is important to acknowledge the fact that the existing research which was explored mainly centred around children of secondary school age or upper primary, despite the Byron review (2008, p.44) and Holloway, Green and Livingstone (2013, p.8) identifying that most children at the age of 7-8 become participants in the virtual world. However the complexities involved with gaining children as participants within such sensitive research can pose multiple barriers. Although the review by Byron

(2008) gained the views of children from as young as 5 through pictures and comments, which is useful if a child centred empowering approach is taken, this particular report was able to put media fuelled anxieties and hype into perspective (Facer 2012, p.405). Therefore although it would have been more ideal to conduct research with younger children to gain their views, but the challenges involved with gaining access to children and designing the research appropriately would be challenging as e-safety is an abstract notion for young children. As a result it was deemed that exploring the relationship between schools and parents in supporting online safety would be beneficial to explore attitudes and strategies that are in place.

Methodology

In order to ensure that the research methods used for this study would provide sufficient data, the following section was written to explore the limitations and strengths of semi structured interviews and questionnaires so that the researcher would be able to address any potential barriers. This chapter also refers to previous investigations where similar methods were used to explore internet safety in schools.

To answer the main question for this research study of how primary schools promote internet safety, it was felt that adopting a case study approach would be the most appropriate. According to Denscombe (2010, p.55) and Yin (2013, p.2) to gain an in depth understanding of a topic and form explanations with a holistic view, while also taking into account the broader context this method is useful. However, because a case study approach was adopted, it is important to note that the findings therefore cannot be generalised as they are too narrow to be representative of a larger population, (Silverman 2010, p.139). Though Bassey (1999, p.12) suggested that although findings from case studies cannot be generalised the notion of relatability is a beneficial aspect as other people may be able to relate to the findings from the research.

It was thought that adopting the interpretivist paradigm, which essentially supports the notion that the participants thoughts and reasons are of central importance built upon subjective experiences (Jarvis et al 2012, p.59) would be appropriate to understand the construction of their perspectives. For this research mixed methods were used to incorporate qualitative research methods which are ideal to understand

individual's views, thoughts and the accumulation of data through words enables researchers to gain an insight into social sciences, through the collection of detailed, rich data (Walliman, 2011, p.130). In combination to this, quantitative research, allows researchers to understand the degree of a phenomenon, Mukherji and Albon (2015, p.15). In the case of this research was through a questionnaire sent to parents (see appendix 1). According to Creswell (2014, p.565) and Bryman (2016, p.641) merging quantitative and qualitative research methods strengthens the credibility and enhances the integrity of an investigation since it is gives a better illustration of the issue being explored.

Prior to conducting any research, ethics approval was first sought and given from the Newman University ethics committee by checking the proposed research plans. According to Denscombe (2010, p.60) research investigations have to be ethically approved to ensure that moral values and laws will be followed accordingly and to protect the participants welfare.

After receiving approval, the researcher approached school settings with information regarding the nature of the investigation and what would be involved if they wished to be a part of the research process. Two schools agreed to participate, after the Deputies of both schools and the governing body of the second school had discussed with the researcher the process that would be involved. In research terms these individuals were the gatekeepers; defined by Denscombe (2014, p.109) as the people who can support researchers with gaining access to the appropriate

individuals for data collection, however their influence over the research was continual even after access had been granted.

The settings were in different geographical locations which was useful to make comparisons of strategies and identify any common practice. In terms of the parents' contribution, having two settings could potentially help to highlight a link between school strategies and parental confidence.

The first school which will be referred to as 'Setting 1' to maintain confidentiality was an 'outstanding' primary school and nursery in an urban area with approximately 181 pupils according to the OFSTED report (2012). It was a relatively small school with one form elementary entry. In the borough of the school 10.9% of the population is economically inactive with the majority of the people living in this area being white British. 4.8% of the population in the borough was in receipt of job seekers allowance, compared to the national average of 3.3% (Street check, 2014).

The second school which will be referred to as 'Setting 2' was a two form entry primary school, judged as 'good' with 373 pupils on roll in an urban area according to the OFSTED (2012). In the location of this setting 62.8% of the people were full time economically active with the majority being white British and the largest ethnic minority group being formed mostly by Pakistanis (9.6%). 37.4% of the people living in this borough had no formal qualifications (Dudley consensus 2001).

To collect data for this study, two research methods were used; semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire. It was thought that these two methods would be ideal as they had been identified from previous studies, particularly by Sharples et al (2009) who although conducted research on a much larger scale with secondary

schools, made use of interviews with teachers, leaders and technical staff. Additionally, survey results from parents were also included, and with the pupils. This research did not include children because it was centered around primary school approaches and it was deemed that this topic could be too abstract for the children to understand.

Interview process

Semi-structured interviews were the main method of data collection as it was believed this would help to gather a large amount of rich data since interviewees are able to answer as extensively as they wish (Flick, 2015, p.140). However, a disadvantage of this suggested by Walsh and Wigens (2003, p.98) is that some of the data could be irrelevant for the purposes of a study. According to Braun and Clarke (2013, p.80) the nature of semi-structured interviews having a pre-planned structure allows some leeway for the researcher to be flexible during the interviews and in the case of any unexpected discussion which the researcher may want to follow up for more elaboration by the respondent. Walsh and Wigens (2003, p.98) claim that a limitation of interviews is that the respondents could give false information, thus risking the validity of the data. In relation to this research since more than one teacher from the two main schools were interviewed, it enabled cross checking of the data.

The pre-planned structure according to Wellington (2015, p.143) ensures that all anticipated areas to be explored are effectively constructed in the form of questions for specific participants. Having a planned structure of questions specific for the different roles of the participants in this study enabled the researcher to make

comparisons in responses between the settings (see appendix 2, 3 and 4). It was anticipated that a significant difficulty associated with conducting interviews would be the time and organisation involved. Particularly because the interviews would be conducted after school hours, and in total there were seven interviews. Palaiologu (2012, p.154) acknowledges the importance of discussing with potential participants what will be asked of them and to form an agreement of times suitable for both parties.

Prior to beginning interviews with the teachers, three semi- structured interviews were planned with well thought out questions relating to the individual roles of the teachers. However, it was crucial that the different participants were not made aware of the questions asked to their colleagues in the event that discussions could be held which in turn could affect the reliability of the findings. Bell (2010, p.119) claims that to uphold reliability it is crucial that equal and constant procedures are retained to formulate genuine results.

The interviews were conducted at a time and place convenient for each participant, after school operating hours. Before beginning the interviews, the purpose of the study was explained to the participants and they were handed a sheet (see appendix 7) outlining why their role was important for this research, explaining how the data collected would be stored and used and stressing that confidentiality and anonymity would be practiced throughout. The interviewees were asked to sign the agreement sheet; which also included the main questions to be asked during the interview (see appendix 2, 3 and 4) as evidence of agreeing to participate; this process ensured that informed consent, which Bell and Waters (2014, p.48) define as being a principal whereby all participants are sufficiently debriefed and made aware of the

nature of the research and any potential implications. They were also made aware of their right to withdraw at any point. The researcher was keen to build rapport with the participants so it was felt that recording the interview on an electronic device would be useful to ensure that the interviewer could focus on the participant and pay close attention to the respondent as well as the fact that by recording the interview and later transcribing, it would make certain that no valuable contributions were missed (Thomas, 2013, p.196). The respondents were made aware before beginning that after the interview, the transcript would be written and the recording from the device would be deleted. It was made clear to the respondents that it was optional to have the interview recorded since it was understandable that they could feel anxious about their thoughts being recorded. The researcher also explained that these questions could be slightly altered and additional questions asked if it was felt that the respondent was giving answers relating to areas that the researcher had not already addressed.

Questionnaire process

To understand parental views, questionnaires were sent to parents with a child in Year 3. As it was recognised through reviewing existing literature children become active participants in the online world at the age of 8 years old. This is usually the stage in which children will begin to venture out more in the online world, beyond the awareness of their parents (Byron 2008, p.44). Although using questionnaires posed difficulties in the process of designing the survey and it was expected that there would be a low response rate, as Kumar (2014, p.181) and Jupp (2013, p.253) claim that questionnaires are notorious for the low response rate, so they can limit

the ability to gain a thorough understanding of a social phenomenon. Low responses could be due to the fact the topic may not be of any interest to the individual, and the design and layout could be too time consuming thus it was vital that time was taken to prepare a questionnaire that was going to address appropriate questions whilst being concise and easy to follow. Printing costs are an issue associated with surveys (Cargan, 2007, p.101) though setting 2 voluntarily allowed the researcher to use their facilities, thus decreasing personal expenses for the researcher.

The questionnaire was sent with a covering letter (see appendix 5) because O'Hara et al (2011, p.152) states attaching a covering letter is a good strategy to improve response rates and concisely inform potential respondents about the purpose of the questionnaire. This stated the reasons for the survey, emphasising that returning the questionnaire was optional and any information given would be treated confidentially, and a more detailed information sheet was attached to address ethical issues and contact details were provided in the event a parent may want to contact the researcher or the relevant teacher (see appendix 6).

It was taken into account during the process of designing the questions that parents may feel obliged to answer questions in a way that they will feel is the 'right answer', known as prestige bias or social desirability whereby participants may alter their responses to make themselves 'look good', potentially affecting the reliability (Thomas, 2009, p.174; Rubin and Babbie, 2010, p.80) thus it was important to plan questions that explored the thoughts of parents and reasons for answers. The design of this questionnaire used dichotomous questions which according to Thomas (2009, p.175) allows the researcher to group the responses with the opportunity to elaborate and explain their answer. Although there were limitations and issues

associated with using questionnaires, for this study it was essential to use questionnaires as a way of gaining parents views.

Drafts of the questionnaire were piloted because this process enables researchers to identify any issues such as the design and the interpretation of the questions with participants who match the intended group so the researcher can address and resolve any difficulties, (Mukherji and Albon, 2015, p.79). Additionally, the questionnaires were also checked by the relevant gatekeepers within both settings so that they were satisfied with the correspondence that would be sent to parents.

Combining two or more research methods to form a conclusion is known in research terms as triangulation. This technique according to Gorard and Taylor (2004, p.52) and Burton and Bartlett (2009, p.26) is effectively used when perspectives from different angles are brought together to build a more valid investigation, as one method is likely to make up for the insufficiency of the other; in this context it could be argued that the interviews were the primary source of information as it was already expected that the number of responses from the questionnaire would be relatively low. Triangulation enables the cross checking of data and in turn strengthens the validity of the findings which is defined by Kumar (2011, p.178) as the process in which standards are maintained to ensure that the initial proposed research is adequately followed. For this investigation the subsidiary questions were firstly, 'what strategies are used within the schools to promote e-safety?' Secondly, 'how are children involved in these processes?' And finally 'how are parents or carers involved in this process?' To uphold validity in this study the teachers were asked similar questions to examine if there was an equal vision of how the schools aimed to

support children and their families with internet safety. Furthermore, by involving parents the researcher was able to identify to what extent the findings from the interview were valid in accordance with responses through the surveys.

From the two schools which agreed to be a part of the research, purposive sampling was used because this strategy is suited to qualitative investigations where the researchers will specifically recruit certain participants because they will be likely to provide accurate information of the topic being explored (Cohen et al 2011, p.157). In this case a member of staff from the senior leadership team was asked to participate as it was thought they would be useful to help illustrate the overall holistic strategic view of the schools response to e-safety. The Computing Co-ordinators were invited as they were likely to have the responsibility of planning and organising the implementation of e-safety within the school and establishing home-school relationships. Finally a Year 3 class teacher was asked to participate so information could be gathered about the confidence of the teacher to promote the safe use of the internet.

Summary

This chapter has discussed the research methods that were used to collect data. By recruiting more than one primary school, it facilitated a comparative element. Interviewing different members of staff within the schools enabled the researcher to gain an understanding of the varying positions and how this could potentially impact their influence of promoting internet safety. Ethical considerations and limitations of the use of questionnaires and conducting semi- structured interviews have been explored in order to address any barriers.

Presentation and Analysis of findings

The following chapter will aim to share and analyse findings gathered from the research for this study which explores how primary schools promote internet safety. Triangulated data gathered from the seven semi structured interviews will be presented using short quotations, and results from the questionnaires to form a discussion. From setting 1 and setting 2 a Deputy Head teacher, Computing Co-ordinator and a Year 3 class teacher were interviewed, in addition to a Computing Co-ordinator at a third primary school. Thirty questionnaires were sent to parents with a child in Year 3 at setting 1 which was a primary school; five responses were collected. Additionally, fifty questionnaires were sent to parents with a child in Year 3 at setting 2, which was also a primary school and 6 responses were collected.

Following the collection of raw data, the information was coded and categorized into the most recurring and prominent themes to form a discussion of the findings. The first theme to be discussed in this chapter are common strategies that were used in the primary schools to promote internet safety, the extent to which children are involved and their subsequent understanding of e-safety. The second theme explores the approaches taken at home by parents, with relation to teachers views on parents understanding of internet safety and finally the strategies used at home will be discussed in a bid to show contrasting approaches. References will be made to past research in order to locate these findings.

During the process of recruiting schools the researcher made contact with a Computing Co-ordinator at a third school; referred to as 'setting 3' who was also a trained CEOP ambassador. To provide an alternative position on the issue of internet safety and young children, an additional semi structured interview was conducted as it was deemed that this participant may be able to give a more informed position on addressing the risks associated with children's participation in the online world. According to the OFSTED report (2010) this primary school had 595 pupils on roll, was a three form entry school and had been judged as being 'outstanding'.

Strategies at school for safe surfing

It was found through all the interviews that the internet is predominantly used for research purposes across different subjects, more specifically for image searches by younger children. Cranmer, Selwyn and Potter (2009, p.133) also established that this is largely the main use of the internet for primary schools. In terms of using search engines, the Computing Co-ordinator of setting 2 and setting 3 informed the researcher that children were not permitted to use a public search engine and instead software was provided by the Local Authority; the 'Internet Channel for Education' which is a child safe, and secure search engine was allowed. Although setting 1 was located in the same Local Authority as the other schools, their main source of information was Google. Upon reflection, perhaps it would have been ideal to inquire about the rationale for setting 1 not to use a child safe search engine.

When asked about what strategies are used within the school environment to promote internet safety, firewalls and filtering systems were a primary strategy used

across all the schools involved, maintained by the Local Authority to prevent inappropriate websites appearing or pop up adverts.

All the interviewees commented on the effectiveness of the filtering software, in relation to innocent searches. The Deputy Head from setting 1 mentioned

> *"Although the filters are quite tight because we've tried to get onto things that are quite innocent, but just occasionally things do slip through because people out there who want to put something up will under something else."*

Similar comments were also made by the interviewees in setting 2, although much emphasis was made about the occurrence of such incidents where inappropriate material was flagged up as being rare and in such instances the provider of the internet services for schools would be notified immediately. These findings support the points made by Hope (2008, p.108) and Sharples et al (2009, p.73) that Local Authority internet providers have a duty to ensure that they implement the filtering software. However as discussed previously in the literature review, filters can be a hindrance for genuine educational searches; although the interviewees in this research did not make any suggestions to support this argument. Taking into account that the research conducted by Hope (2008) and Sharples et al (2009) was largely based with older children. It may be that the specific age range for this research mostly involved younger children using the internet to search for images related to topic work and therefore it could be deemed that the filtering software only poses a problem if the internet is used in a more complex manner by individuals who have more advanced skills and understanding. Moreover, there could be an indication to suggest that the interviewees were not taking a critical view of the filtering software.

It was interesting to note that the school at which the CEOP trained teacher was based had a software program, 'secureus' designed to monitor keyword searches that led to inappropriate activity or content. When asked to elaborate on the use of this software the teacher commented

> *"Anything that comes up where a percentage of flesh is revealed or an indecent word is there it flags it up straight away, it takes a screen shot and will back track each key stroke so you can see exactly what the child has typed."*

Through further research into this particular software it was found that this is an initiative as part of the UK Council for Child Internet Safety specifically designed to promote online safeguarding, to protect children from risks such as online grooming, cyber bullying and access to explicit content (Internet Watch Foundation, 2014). In the context of this research it could be suggested that this additional software which is used in setting 3 could be as the result of a teacher who has a more informed, specialist position and knowledge of available support.

It was highlighted by the interviewees that in the broader context the UK's Safer Internet Centre's introduction of Safer Internet Day is a significant marking in the three schools participating in this research curriculum planning, specifically for focusing on e-safety. This initiative was part of the cross Government action plan by the Department for Children, School and Families (2008, p.13) following the publication of the review by Bryon (2008) regarding childrens internet safety, recommendation for stakeholders, including the UK Council for Child Internet Safety in partnership with agencies such as CEOP, Ofcom and Government departments to form an e-safety week.

The discussion of strategies used in the schools enabled the researcher to answer the subsidiary question of how children are involved in the process of encouraging online safety. There seemed to be some variation in the length of the schools dedicated phase for internet safety. Setting 1 had an e-safety week in which an external theatre company hosted drama based workshops for all the year groups, with opportunities for children to get actively involved and they were differentiated for the ages. During this week the Computing Co-ordinator also led an e-safety assembly for the whole school.

Setting 2 had a one day focus, whereby the Computing Co-ordinator led an assembly differentiated for the two key stages, planned activities for the day for all the year groups and organised a visit from the police.

Setting 3 implemented a focus for the whole school lasting a half term that corresponded with the Safer Internet Day. During this time the children were taught how to communicate safely online, and similar to the other schools a focused assembly was held, with support from 'digital leaders'; these were children in upper Key Stage 2 who have been identified as being gifted and talented in Computing, so they received extensive training on how to stay safe online. They created short case study videos to show their younger peers during the assemblies focusing on good and bad practice when children face a threat online. During the interviews the participants were reminded that this research had a specific focus on encouraging internet safety for the younger children. Setting 3 was the only school involved who had a key strategy introduced from Reception and carried this through till the beginning of Key Stage 2. This strategy used a short rhyme *'before you click click click, you've got to think think think'*. In relation to policy which schools must adhere

to the Ofsted (2014) proposes that engaging activities, suited to the differing ages of the children that teach children how to remain safe online are important to facilitate childrens awareness in order for them to become responsible users of the internet. Interestingly setting 1 and setting 2 did not make use of a similar method specifically for the youngest children in school; this could perhaps suggest that they did not feel it was necessary to introduce children to online safety in the early years.

In addition to this specific phase of planning in the curriculum, the class teachers and Computing Co-ordinators across the settings informed the researcher that promoting internet safety is an ongoing process as it is an aspect of safeguarding and particularly in computing lessons children were reminded of being sensible online. A recurring phrase used to describe this by the interviewees was '*constantly drip feeding'*. The Information Communication Technologies (ICT) suite for all the participating schools was the central space for encouraging e-safety through the use of posters created by the children and displays. In their cross country analysis of online activities by children and safety strategies Haddon et al (2012, p.70) emphasised that school environments offer many opportunities for children to develop their digital skills thus making the schools a key place to facilitate the encouragement of children to be responsible and sensible users of the internet.

It was thought that asking each participant during the interviews 'How are children empowered to be safe and responsible participators in the online world?' would enable the researcher to form an understanding of how the different roles by the staff altered their perception of empowering children. With the growing use of technology by younger children it would be interesting to see how the schools were

equipping children with the capacity to judge online risks. Members of staff at setting 1 and setting 2 conveyed the idea that it was difficult to empower children since using filters created a 'safe wall' so in effect children cannot be exposed to the risks. For example at setting 1 the Computing Co-ordinator answered

> *"It's quite hard to in school because of the nature of the filters they are protected anyway, so we're almost taking the risk away, and that's good but it's also not educating them about the risks."*

In response to the question regarding empowerment the Deputy Head at setting 2 answered

> *"Children have to learn from their mistakes almost and we're in a situation where we're not and can't be allowing them to make those sorts of mistakes."*

These views could create an illustration of a dichotomy for schools between ensuring that pupils are protected from online threats so taking adequate measures to ensure that the internet access within school is safe. On the other hand this approach prevents teachers from fully being able to convey to children the consequences of not being safe users of the internet and especially as children use the internet outside of school which will not always be provided with the same precautions. Dixon (2013,p.170) discusses the difficulty for schools to explicitly make children aware of the consequences of online risks since they often make use of 'blanket approaches', which as a result can make children more vulnerable as they are not given opportunities to develop the critical skills to be resilient users online.

A key aspect noted from the discussion of empowerment and responsibility was the use of the CEOP report button. Setting 1, 2 and 3 had installed this on their web browser toolbars and it was emphasised that children are aware of how to report an

issue should they experience an incident online. It is crucial to note that according to CEOP (no date) this facility is specifically designed to investigate issues relating to individuals gaining contact with children on the internet.

It was identified by the participants that e-safety is an abstract notion for young children, but with the growing use of mobile technologies it is essential that children understand that the rules of staying safe online do not just apply to the computers at school but also in the wider context. Data collected from setting 1 from three parents pointed to age of their child in year 3 being a factor for their child not fully understanding the separation between the online and real world. One parent commented

> *"The age of my daughter restricts a full comprehension and lack of experience to any danger."*

To support this, the class teacher at setting 1 considered the effectiveness of these strategies saying

> *"Even when you teach it you don't fully know when they comprehend what you mean."*

In comparison at setting 2 a related theme of the difficulty for children to fully understand the online risks at this age was recognised. A parent response from setting 2 stated

> *"The gap in ages between my children makes a huge difference in their understanding of what can happen online."*

The Deputy Head at setting 2 also acknowledged this by saying

> "*some of the things we tell them, especially for younger children are difficult for them to apply to real life."*

These attitudes from the adults presented show that young children do not understand online safety. Although it could not be measured the extent to which these views are true since childrens views were not sought as part of this research, Cranmer, Selwyn and Potter (2009, p.137) explored pupils perceptions to online risks and found that for children in lower Key Stage 2 at Primary Schools their grasping of the idea of e-safety did not always meet the view that practitioners would have since childrens interpretations of online safety was different. Cranmer, Selwyn and Potter (2009, p.133) found in their research that when children were encouraged to discuss how they could stay safe when they use computers, their responses would relate to aspects such as 'keeping drinks away' from the computer, but it was highlighted that as the ages of the children progressed they began to view safety in accordance to adult perceptions.

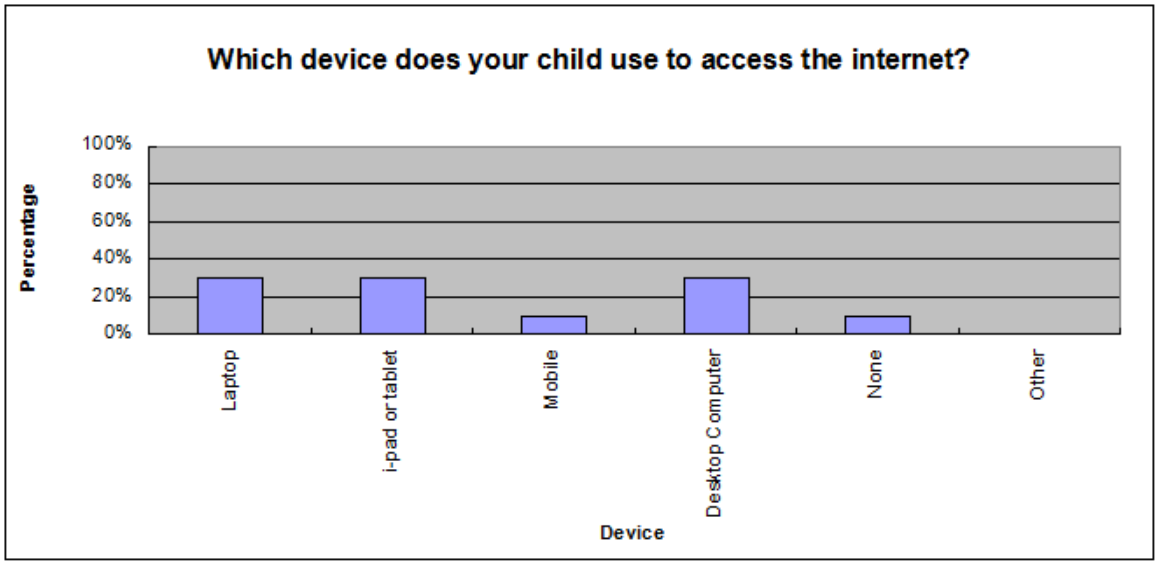
In particular, when asked about the importance of engaging young children with e-safety the Deputy Head from setting 1 said the following

> *"they're becoming more competent with the use of the internet, particularly on things like tablets and phones, and I think that it's really helpful now that we've got i-pads in school because I think they transfer what we tell them now about internet safety, it doesn't just mean the computer suite and computers in school, they'll understand that that's on all different devices."*

To explore the use of popular devices used at home, parents were asked to identify the devices their child uses to access the internet with the opportunity to locate as

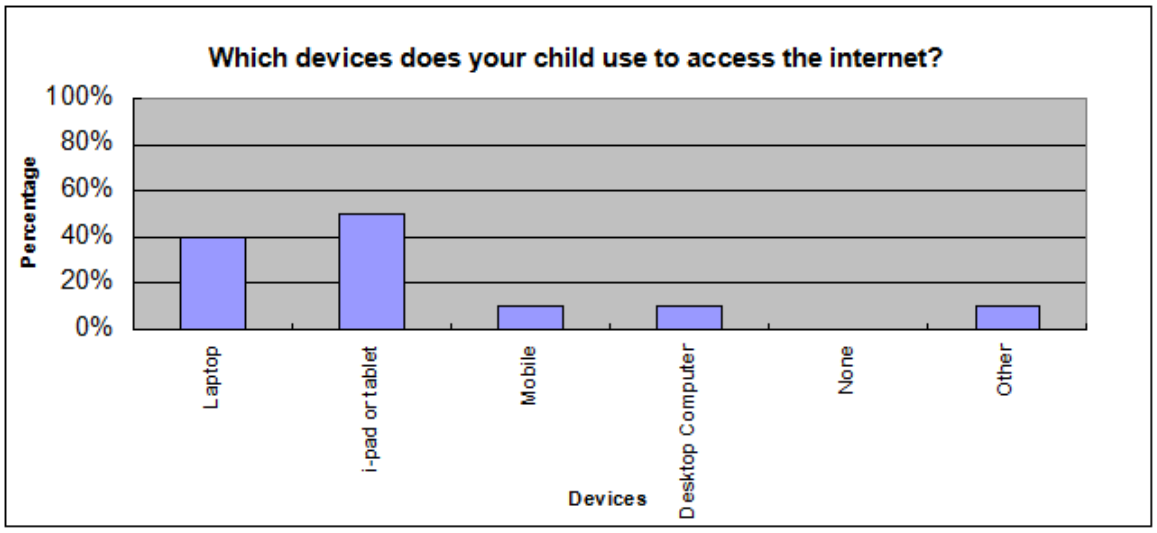
many as applicable; the results for this question were used to formulate the graphs below. The percentage figures reflect the number of parents whose children use these devices.

Setting 1



One parent participant chose the 'none' option, supported by a comment that their child was only allowed to use the family shared computer.

Setting 2



One parent participant chose the 'other' option, stating that this was their television.

It can be seen that there was a slightly higher number of children from setting 2 who use i-pads or tablets, in comparison to setting 1. On the other hand there were more children who use a desktop computer at home from Setting 1 than setting 2. The use of hand held devices was explored by Haddon et al (2012, p.70) who give attention to the increased risk to children of online threats as it becomes more difficult for adults to monitor their online activities.

Educating Parents

One of the supporting subsidiary questions for this research aimed to explore how parents are involved in the process of encouraging internet safety. It was found that all three schools made use of a home- school diary used to record homework in which the 'SMART' online rules were recorded and also displayed within the ICT suites in school. These rules encourage children to stay safe online by not releasing personal details, not to meet anyone they have befriended online, to be cautious when accepting messages or files, to ensure they find reliable information and finally to tell somebody if something happens online which upsets or concerns them.

Setting 2 and setting 3 hosted workshops for parents that coincided with Safer Internet Day, informing them of the risks online and how to ensure their child is protected from online risks, although it was discussed that attendance is an issue. Moreover, it was acknowledged by the Computing Co-ordinator and Deputy Head at setting 1 that more steps could be taken on their behalf to involve parents. As part of the inspections of primary school practice carried out by Ofsted (2014) it is

recommended that schools promote e-safety through a holistic approach by involving pupils and parents as internet safety is a contribution to safeguarding children.

In relation to the parents responses from setting 1, to the question regarding satisfaction with support from the school, indicated that those parents who participated in this research relied on the school to teach their child about e-safety.

The important role that schools play in supporting parents with the awareness of internet safety and recommended strategies is discussed by Vitalaki et al (2012, p.133) with suggestions that parent- school meetings can greatly encourage families to understand how to better protect their children online, with supported recommendations for materials. The Deputy Head of setting 2 informed the researcher that at the previous workshop for parents, a free software link was given out to activate parental controls at home. Furthermore it was mentioned that although the workshops did not have high attendance rates by parents due to other commitments, nonetheless the school could be seen to be fulfilling their role. Findings from the study by Vitalaki et al (2012, p.132) indicate that the relationship between schools and parents is a significant aspect in ensuring children are suitably supported online. Furthermore, the low numbers of attendance were flagged up by the interviewees from setting 2 and setting 3 as a lack of concern from some parents about their priority with online safety. However, it could be suggested that these two primary schools should consider why parents may not be attending so that they could attempt to address any barriers but with limitations such as funding and resources they perhaps do not prioritise exploring the reasons for low attendance. Byron (2008, p.121) emphasised that conveying the message that online parenting is

just as important as protecting children from risks in the offline world is an important part of engaging parents.

It was claimed by all the interview participants involved that differing approaches to internet safety at home pose a challenge for schools. In particular, when asked about the challenges involved with promoting e-safety, the class teacher from setting 2 answered

> "*It's also about educating parents which is really important...Their understanding and approach is important to make sure they understand the limits and for all this to be effective we should be singing off the same hymn sheet"*

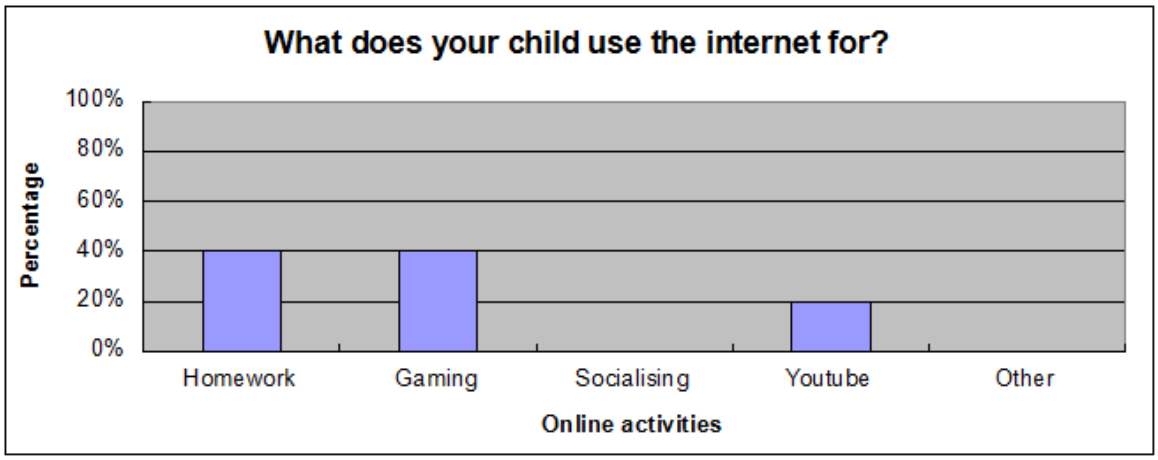
Similarly the Computing Co-ordinator of setting 3 and Deputy Head of setting 2 expressed their concern with parents allowing children to access social media at home despite being underage.

> *"You've got children down in Year 1 who use their parent's phones and go onto Facebook and see things they shouldn't be seeing"*

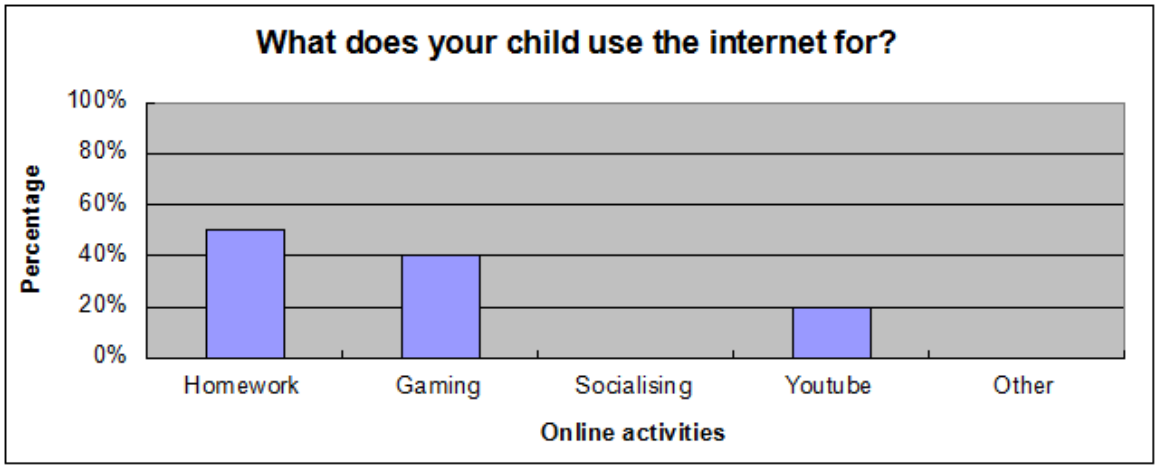
> *"You're going to have parents who think it's okay to set children up with a Facebook page who don't understand the dangers"*

The bar charts below indicate that the views of the teachers regarding what parents allow their children to use the internet for contrast the answers given through the questionnaire.

Setting 1



Setting 2



Although the results from the survey cannot be generalised and applied to a wider population since the response rates were low, the answers indicate that children from the families who participated do not use social media. On the other hand, it could be possible that during the interviews the teachers may have been referring to older children in the school although this was not specified. The contrasting views between the teachers and reality of what parents responded could potentially be due to parents choosing answers which they would feel are socially desirable. It could be inferred that the internet is mainly seen as a source of research to support academic

tasks, similar to school approaches. The top three online activities highlighted in this survey with parents, correspond the findings by Haddon et al (2012, p.69) and Cranmer, Selwyn and Potter (2009, p.133) who that identified homework, gaming and videos are the most popular uses of the internet.

Parental strategies

It was identified that there was a unanimous consensus from the teachers that, despite the fact children are taught how to stay protected online supported by the software available to schools to protect children, this was not always transferred to home. The teachers may have held these views based on personal assumptions or experiences with older children in the schools which had led them to form such perceptions.

To gain an understanding of the extent to which parents encourage safe use of the internet at home, it was felt that asking them if they have any concerns about their child using the internet followed by a question exploring their strategies perhaps could highlight levels of confidence in their approach to online safety.

Firstly, one out of the five respondents from setting 1 said they had concerns about their child using the internet. This respondent explained that their concern was that their child

> *"Doesn't get outside enough."*

These findings are similar to the responses from parents at setting 2, as one parent felt concerned their child

"Doesn't read books for information, relies on the internet."

It could be suggested that perhaps the wording of the question asking parents about concerns related to their child using the internet was too broad thus open to be interpreted in different ways.

The majority of the parents commented that they felt their child was safe because they *'monitor'* or *'supervise'* their child online. It is significant to note that parents heavily emphasised that their child is not permitted to use devices with internet access in a private space, without the presence of an adult nearby. Although it can be seen from the data recorded in the bar charts that some children have access to mobile phones, but it was not specified if these belonged to the parents and were shared with their child.

This approach supports the findings by Duerager and Livingstone (no date, p.2) of active mediation whereby 59% of parents in their survey were found to actively mediate their child's internet use through their physical presence thus taking a preventative approach to avoid online dangers. Moreover, Duerager and Livingstone (no date, p.1) and Haddon et al (2012, p.70) claim that there is a rise of children accessing the internet through hand held devices thus making it difficult for parents to monitor their online activity. However, the parents who participated in this survey felt that they were suitably supporting their child. It could be suggested that due to the low response rate from parents for this study, those who did participate may have more competency with using the internet in comparison to the parents who did

not participate. The generational divide between children and their parents can influence the levels of confidence adult may have with using the internet and as an outcome the strategies they use to promote online safety. Furthermore the results from the study by Sharples et al (2009, p.80) also highlighted that a primary strategy for parents is to take preventative approaches by ensuring that the physical location of their child's internet device is nearby so that they can observe the online activity.

An ongoing theme identified from the questionnaire responses from the parents was the notion of ensuring their child was on 'age appropriate' sites and their child's age being a factor in the comprehension of the risks online. One parent from setting 1 commented

> *"I like to keep an eye out that he's on appropriate sites"*

Similar to this a parent from setting 2 noted

> *"I like to make sure my child is only using the internet for which I feel is appropriate for his age"*

Research by Sharples et al (2009, p.72) discusses that perception of inappropriate content is a subjective term as this can vary from pop up adverts encouraging unhealthy foods to open access to explicit material or social networking sites. Using subjective language can make it difficult to understand the meaning behind what the parents may have been discussing. Sharples et al (2009, p.80) through the use of a survey to parents with older children, than the focus of this research, concluded that parents have a preference to monitor their child's online activity due to incidents

where accidentally unsuitable material may pop up or their child may knowingly access a site their parents would not allow. Boyd and Hargittai (2013, p.263) found that parents of younger children are wary their child may be exposed to violent or explicit videos or sites, especially because younger children lack the critical skills. In relation to the findings from this research at setting 3 the teacher explained that there was a fine line between inappropriate and uncomfortable and in instances where children may come across an image of a female in swim wear then it was the responsibility of staff to distinguish the difference with children, thus taking a more empowering approach to support children with building maturity in dealing with material they may see online. Similarly, when the Computing Co-ordinator of setting 2 was asked about the challenges for promoting internet safety the response began with the following statement:

"It's the understanding of what is seen as inappropriate and what isn't."

It was discussed that this was a challenge in terms of differences between school and parent perceptions, childrens maturity and contrasts between restrictions in school and at home. This argument could illustrate the balance that schools need to provide in order to be meeting their statutory requirements and fulfilling the agenda of policymakers whilst also involving parents in the process to ensure that children can develop a responsible attitude when they participate in the online world.

Summary

Overall, from the research that was conducted for this case study it has been found that there are some key strategies that the schools involved in this research use to promote responsible and safe use of the internet. These include using the ICT suites as an environment to remind children about the 'SMART' rules and to give children an ongoing reminder in computing lessons of using the internet as suggested. It has been found that the schools in this study engage parents through the agreement policy in pupils school dairies where acceptable use of the internet is detailed as well as inviting parents into school to inform them of the relevance of attention to online safety is a key strategy. Although setting 1 did not host these workshops there was a clear indication from the Computing Co-ordinator and Deputy that they were aware this was an aspect they could use in the future. Away from the school approach, parents who participated mostly felt satisfied that their supervision and monitoring was adequate to keep their child safe, and parents felt that the school had equipped children well with digital literacy skills. It has been illustrated that there was a misconception between what school staff thought internet access at home was being utilised for and what parents claim the internet is used for. It can be argued for the teachers to have a more informed position of parental approaches for online safety; the schools need to engage in more dialogue with parents. Although two of the three primary schools offered support for parents, they did not seem to have considered ways to engage and reach out more to parents. Since the response rate from the parents was significantly low, there could be a possibility that those who did return the questionnaire were confident users of the internet so they might have felt comfortable with exploring their approaches to online safety.

Conclusion

In summary it has been found that promoting internet safety for young children within Primary School settings is a process involving teachers, children and importantly parents. This research aimed to explore how the settings participating in this study promoted internet safety and through analysis of the findings it has been recognised that there are strategies such as the use of filtering software that are applied compulsorily through the management of internet provision by Local Authorities. When beginning this research three subsidiary questions were formed to support the exploration of the broader issue of internet safety. The methods used to encourage safe use of the internet were explored, the involvement of children in the practice of encouraging internet safety and to what extent parents are involved in the process of encouraging safe use of the internet.

Through analysis of the findings it was identified that there were some key strategies used across all the settings. These included key word filters to prevent inappropriate material appearing, using computing lessons as a source of ongoing reminders to follow the 'SMART' rules and making use of the physical environment through displays. It was noted that setting 2 and setting 3 made use of a specialised child safe search engine, the 'Internet Channel for Education'. Upon reflection, due to the organisations of the semi structured interviews held at the schools, an opportunity to seek an understanding of why setting 1 did not make use of this software was missed; it perhaps would have been useful to know the reasons for this school not making use of this provision, and since this school was the only participating school to not host parent workshops, it maybe would have been beneficial to explore

additional broader factors that can influence the commitment setting 1 had to encourage internet safety. It was evident that the assigned 'Internet Safety day' initiative was a focal aspect for the schools in terms of ensuring that a whole school focus was given to reminding children about e-safety.

The findings from this research illustrated some discrepancies between the interviewee's perceptions of home approaches to internet safety and the results gathered from the parent questionnaires. Since internet safety is a concept that applies to all users of the internet, perhaps the interview respondents may have at times applied their answers to older children within the school, although they were informed this study was focusing on young childrens use of the internet. Nonetheless, it was highlighted that a lack of dialogue between the parents and school was a hindrance in the teachers understanding of internet use at home by young children.

Reviewing previous research prior to gathering data, highlighted the importance placed on schools to work with parents, (Vitalaki et al, 2012: 132). The findings for this study found that where the settings offered workshops, the majority of parents did not attend. This disengagement could have been further explored by asking the parents of setting 2 if they had previously attended a workshop and their thoughts, and the parents of setting 1 could have been asked if they would have interest in attending. However, limitations for this study prevented the researcher from gathering a detailed insight into parent's perspectives since through discussions with the teachers at school it was advised to the researcher that using a questionnaire would be the most ideal method to access parents. Perhaps more sophisticated

research on a larger scale involving parents as key stakeholders could help to form an understanding of additional factors which influence online parenting styles.

In relation to the research methods that were used to collect data, conducting semi-structured interviews within the school settings with specific members of staff was beneficial as this helped the researcher to take into account different perspectives based upon their role in promoting internet safety. Moreover, involving more than one setting for this research proved to be beneficial as it enabled a comparison between the approaches taken to encourage internet safety. Although it could be argued that since this study was limited, opportunities to take into account the broader contexts and different wider factors between the settings could have helped to form a better understanding of the dedication towards e-safety for the schools. In terms of eliciting responses from parents through the use of a questionnaire, this was a particular limitation for this research since the response rate was low, although this was expected during the planning. Furthermore, using a questionnaire resulted in no dialogue between the researcher and parents which could have been useful to explore their views.

Future research in the area of internet safety for young children could be more meaningful through the involvement of children's views for policy makers and practitioners to be able to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies used and understand internet safety from childrens perspectives. Moreover, previous research exploring internet safety within primary school settings was difficult to locate, but as the World Wide Web evolves at a fast pace thus exposing children to new risks it is

crucial to equip them with the critical tools to navigate around the risks in the virtual world.

Overall, it has been discovered that the internet is an integral part in the lives of children today and although it brings with it exciting new opportunities there are numerous potential risks. Partnerships between parents and schools are key to ensuring that children are adequately supported with online safety in their environments. Encouraging children to be active and critical users is an essential aspect in the process of promoting internet safety, but it has been conveyed that primary schools and local authorities prohibit children from being critically active by removing any potential risks. From the age group of the children this research was related to it can be deemed children are not prepared as effectively as they could be, since the overriding philosophy of adults being in control restricts their online freedom thus creating risk aversion.

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