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Media Education in Families with Little Children

ECREA 2016 preconference: Research of Children, Youth and Media





Family Life with Mobile Media

> **EMPIRICAL STUDY**
> **EXPERTISE:**
“foundation for media
education in families”

Research Questions

1. Which insights from child and adolescent development, psychology and media research are relevant to media education?
2. What are parents' needs and questions in terms of mobile media and Internet usage? What kind of support do families need?
3. What kind of questions do professionals have? And what kind of support do they need?

Method

Expertise "Foundation for Media Education in Families"

Interviews: Parents

53 parents: 18 fathers, 35 mothers with children age 8-14;
7 group discussions,
12 couples, 1 single father

October/November 2015

Interviews: Counsellors

35 professionals in educational counselling child and youth welfare service institutions: 24 female, 11 male, 21-64 years;
5 group discussions, 4 single interviews

October/November 2015

Findings – Attitudes of Parents

Digital media are part of their daily lives and used to satisfy needs

→ Media education = part of parenting

- **Fathers: greater affinity for mobile media**
 - in charge of acquiring devices
 - rely on technical solutions
 - Would like more support from schools
- **Mothers: more conscious of being role models**
 - rely on communication with their children and (family)rules
- **Some parents: take their own usage for granted, yet, prevent their children from using mobile devices**



Findings – Concerns of Parents and Professionals

PARENTS

- Difficulties in media education because of
 - lack of knowledge and experience (e.g. with older siblings)
 - technical protective measures are difficult to handle
 - children of different age need different rules
- Anticipated fears and concerns
 - less influence of parents as the children grow older
 - increasing importance of mobile media
 - risk of addiction

PROFESSIONALS

- parents are uncritical of their own media usage (e.g. mobile media as babysitter)
- parents are not aware of their function as role models for their children
- parents may lose awareness of the needs of their young children when they use mobile media too extensively

QUOTES

about ROLE MODELS:

"It's a matter of fact that parents aren't very conscious of their influence as role models for their children. They use media without realizing that their children observe all their behaviors, even the most minute performance."

of a 12 year old daughter about MEDIA USAGE & RECREATION:

"When she really has spare time – I've got the feeling that when she really has free time, she would definitely spend 100 per cent of her time on her smartphone. I've talked over this issue with many people. [...] I've got a friend. And with her son, it's exactly the same."

about HELPLESSNESS:

"Again and again, it dawns on me that with this issue "media" we're often at a loss. Well ... on other topics, you can collect experiences over the years and decades – however, with this issue, I usually find myself at a loss. And I've also met parents who are just as helpless; otherwise, they wouldn't have come to us. But this helplessness is much more pervasive than in other issues."

Needs of Parents

- from schools
 - Active involvement in media education
 - But: parents don't want mobile media to play a role in nursery and kindergarten – neither as tools nor as a pedagogical subject
- from media education experts
 - Practical advice for media education in the family
 - Individualized counselling
- from information materials
 - to be well-prepared
 - offering a good overview and good examples



Needs of Parents in Professionals' View

- knowledge of developmental stages of children and how these are related to media educational tasks
- orientation regarding (family) rules and strategies of regulation
- stronger solidarity among parents
- cooperation in media education between parents and schools/educational institutions

about KNOWLEDGE:

"Then, there's this Instagram. I only know it exists. But what it is exactly and ... I don't know! And those are things I feel ... the knowledge about it, how it works, how it is, what ... what one should pay attention to – that would be very helpful."

of a 10 year old boy about RULES:

"The problem that I have, is that there are no clear rules. Everybody just makes their own rules. And I as a mother always have to compete with what the others are allowed."



Conclusions

1. Sensitize parents to
 - encourage reflection on parents' own media usage and their function as role models
 - children's media usage, their related needs and motives
2. Convey knowledge about media, media usage and age-appropriate digital offers & contents suitable for their age and stage of development. Inform about the potentials of media usage as well as its potential risks and problems.
3. Make precise suggestions or provide action plan to integrate media education in parents' daily lives.

MoFam II

Study on the situation in day-care centers and the needs of professionals

- **What is important?**
- **Which are your experiences?**
- **What is essential for successful media education in day-care centers?**
- ...

Thanks a lot for your ideas'

