

**Report for the EECERA SIG Digital Childhoods from attending the  
COST Action meeting in Larnaka Cyprus**

**17-18 March 2016**

**The digital literacy and multimodal practices of young children  
(DigiLitEY)**

**led by Professor Jackie Marsh**

I attended the COST Action Meeting in Larnaka Cyprus on behalf of the EECERA SIG Digital Childhood. Detailed information about the nature of this project can be found at :

<https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/education/research/groups/csnl/digilitey>

[http://www.cost.eu/COST\\_Actions/isch/IS1410?](http://www.cost.eu/COST_Actions/isch/IS1410?)

The meeting lasted two days. The first day was keynote speakers and presentations disseminating research findings around the use of digital technologies in education contexts with emphasis in early childhood education.

The second day started with one keynote speaker and then the group was divided into sub working groups to discuss the actions following this COST Action meeting.

Below are the three Abstracts of the keynote speakers:

**Keynote 1**

A framework for 21st century literacies?

Cathy Burnett, Sheffield Hallam University, UK

This presentation take as its focus a 'Framework for 21st Century Literacies' proposed in *New Literacies around the Globe* (co-edited with Julia Davies, Guy Merchant and Jennifer Rowsell). Devised as a framework for 21st century literacy pedagogies

across age phases, the principles underpinning this framework easily align with those long associated with early years pedagogy and practice. However, in England at least, early years literacy policy is increasingly positioning literacy as individualised, paper based and fixed, sidelining the digital as well as the embodied, social and material dimensions of meaning-making foregrounded through this framework. At the same time, in documents claiming to promote 21st century literacies (e.g. World Economic Forum, 2015), relationships between technology and education are increasingly framed in relation to technical skills, or the logics associated with 'scientific', or 'mathematical' thinking. This presentation therefore will explore the framework, its relationship to research into young children's digital and multimodal literacy practices, and its resonance with early years pedagogy. It will argue that re-asserting principles such as those established through the framework is particularly important given their dissonance with dominant discourses around literacy and technology

## **Keynote 2**

NP3: New purposes, new practices, new pedagogy:

Enhancing learning lives with digital literacies in the Early Years

Julia Gillen, Lancaster University, UK

NP3 is a research project funded by the UK Society for Educational Studies finding out about how children's digital practices "flow in and out of their schools" (Sheehy, 2013: 409). We are exploring how children use mobile phones, tablets, laptops and other digital devices in their home and communities and what impact, if any, these practices have on what pupils and teachers do inside primary schools. We are also examining innovative uses of digital tools within schools and how, in turn, these permeate boundaries.

For this presentation I will be drawing on my own fieldwork in two innovative schools in England. Both are situated in economically challenged areas, and yet where the schools' philosophies share Gutierrez's (2013) aspiration "for an expanded view of learning as the organisation of possible futures." I will share some glimpses into practical, yet sometimes inspirational activities around digital tools in the lives of young children. Connections will be made with longstanding understandings of the

importance of fostering learning identities, a sense of place and belonging, and the always situated nature of learning. In illustrating differences between paths the schools take, I hope to foster reflective inquiry.

### **Keynote 3**

Literacy acquisition in the superdiverse elementary school: Shifting populations, media, pedagogies and educational horizons

Heather Lotherington, York University, Toronto

Language is a tool for communication that is fundamentally mediated. The ability to extend linguistic communication via technology we understand as literacy. Becoming literate has been recognized and enshrined as a cornerstone of formal education across the history of mass education. However, what literacy comprises has changed beyond recognition in tandem with rapidly developing technical media. Who we teach has changed, too, as global population flows transform the cultural landscape, and the elementary school classroom.

While the pace of social change has been meteoric, change in public schooling has been less dynamic, hobbled by political and institutional complexities. In a decade-long collaborative research project housed at an inner city elementary school in Toronto, Canada, a teacher-researcher consortium met regularly to redesign literacy education for superdiverse schoolchildren socialized into digital multimodal practices, but not necessarily into the dominant language of schooling (English). This presentation describes how we developed project-based multimodal literacy education that utilized digital multimodality as a facilitating tool in incorporating—and sharing—children’s cultural and linguistic knowledge. Our learning community’s successes and failures, including what we overcame and what overcame us, will be shared, illustrated by children’s beautiful multimodal literacy products.

### **Paper sessions included:**

#### **Paper session 1**

Young children, parents and digital technology in the home context across Europe: The findings of the extension of the Young children (0-8) and digital technology pilot study to 17 European countries in 2015

Stephane Chaudron

Children under five and digital technologies: Implications for pedagogy in early childhood

Ioanna Palaiologou

## **Paper session 2**

Towards New Transversal Competences: Multiliteracy, ICT and Media Education Pedagogies in Finnish Early Childhood Education

Saara Pääjärvi

Policy Perspective on the Digital Literacy of Pre-schoolers' in Denmark

Anne Meth Thorhauge

## **Database link**

As part of the COST Action The digital literacy and multimodal practices of young children (DigiLitEY) a Research Methodology Database has been created. With this tool it is aimed to gather information from studies focused on the digital practices and experiences of children between 0-8 years of age or of other studies that might be directly relevant to children in this age group. Anyone who has conducted studies that fall within the scope of interest or know of relevant references are strongly encouraged to access the database form and answer the relevant questions to include their study in the database. The first stage of the project seeks to compile a comprehensive database of current research and in the second stage there are plans to develop tools that will allow all users to retrieve information and references from this database.

Database link:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1Fd7jKPO5JGdWZM0vty-j7IMbobzI3DUOLmBuqZSicXA/viewform>

**Concluding remarks:**

In the final closing meeting the following action points were agreed:

1. Jackie Marsh to draft the white paper for training of early years teachers with key aims and objectives to address the lack of research on the areas that fall into the interest of the group. This White paper will address the nature and quality of training of teachers in relation to digital technologies
2. To undertake some pilot studies in four EU countries with potentially applying for a bigger research grant through EU Horizon 20/20 funding body

It is in the interest of our SIG that we follow up the developments of this project as it is relevant to the themes of the SIG. The next meeting is in Prague in Autumn 2016.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at [ioannapad@icloud.com](mailto:ioannapad@icloud.com) if you have any questions regarding this project.

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