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Digital Resiliency: The Vision of Transforming Educational Policy to Enhance Digital Literacy for Thai Children

สุจิตรา แก้วสีนวล[1] **Sujittra Kaewseenual**
อุดมลักขณ์ ธรรมปัญญา[2] **Udomluck Thampanya**

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Abstract

The objectives of this study are to explore situations of digital experiences in online risks in child perception, implementation barrier of digital literacy in school in Thailand, and the vision of transformation "digital literacy" policy in Thailand. The study reviewed relevant

[1] อาจารย์ ดร.สุจิตรา แก้วสีนวล อาจารย์ประจำ คณะสารสนเทศและการสื่อสาร มหาวิทยาลัยแม่โจ้
Sujittra Kaewseenual, Ph.D. Lecturer of Faculty of Information and Communication, Maejo University

[2] อาจารย์ ดร.อุดมลักขณ์ ธรรมปัญญา อาจารย์ประจำ คณะสารสนเทศและการสื่อสารมหาวิทยาลัยแม่โจ้
Udomluck Thampanya, Ph.D. Lecturer of Faculty of Information and Communication, Maejo University

คณะสารสนเทศและการสื่อสาร มหาวิทยาลัยแม่โจ้ เลขที่ 63 หมู่ 4 ต.หนองหาร อ.สันทราย จ.เชียงใหม่ 50290

Faculty of Information and Communication, Maejo University, 63 Sansai-Phrao Road, Nongharn, Sansai District, Chiang Mai Thailand 50290

Corresponding Author E-mail: sujittracrystal@gmail.com

research articles both in Thailand and other counties. The results of this study revealed that digital experiences in online risks in child perception are violence, cyber bullying, fake information and sexual encounter. Thai children were often restricted by adults to homogeneous categories designed to be protective in the context of digital literacy education. Regulation and safety technologies were put in place to restrict children's vulnerability to harm and children were seen as passive recipients that adults attempted to control and manipulate. Meanwhile, in the online world many Thai children regularly take responsible risks and build resilience for themselves. This article argues that digital literacy which is either framed only by discourses derived from traditional culture or by practices derived from global standardization, deprives children of the opportunity to develop strong competencies, and literacies in relation to digital media use. Instead, we suggest that Thai children should be given opportunities, via an elaborated and context-specific code of digital literacy, which can expand their coping capacity to be truly resilient.

Keywords: digital literacy, digital resilience, risky opportunities, educational policy, children

Introduction

The provision of Digital Literacy skills has been considered as a core competency for improving the lifelong learning quality of Thai students. According to the most recent policy initiative "Thailand Digital Economy and Society Development Plan", there is a 20 year-long strategy goal that all Thais will be digitally literate

and become digitally competent, as evaluated by international standards. In addition, the Basic Education Core Curriculum 2008 aims to inculcate learners with five key competencies: communication capacity, thinking capacity, problem-solving capacity, capacity for applying life skills, and capacity for technological application (The Ministry of Education Thailand, n.d.). These are considered the core skills necessary to achieve the established goal that Thai people function as global citizens. The most recent scheme is Thailand 4.0. that aims to transform Thais into "Competent human beings in the 21sth Century". Thai government pushed Thailand 4.0 initiatives which was driven by the philosophy of 'education for all and all for education' andit has been promoting through Thailand's national agenda (Jones & Pimdee, 2017).

However, several studies have argued that digital literacy is not just the acquisition of a skill-set and that digital literacy is more than a set of specific internet competencies a child may or may not possess. It is rather a combination of knowledge, competencies and attitudes (Buckingham, 2007; Livingstone, 2009). These differences have challenging implications in terms of how we teach, particularly in settings that are culturally and socially diverse. Further, the concept of literacy is not neutral. It is used as a tool of social judgment (Green , 2014; Bjørgen & Erstad, 2015). Even though media education is typically regarded as a solution to a problem, the central concern is about the media's apparent lack of cultural value, and indeed, the risks might possibly pose to established cultural values (Stakrude, 2013). Consequently, even though literacy might increase in a superficial sense, children in societies, where there is an underlying fear of digital media engagement, cannot practice critical thinking abilities in their real lives.

Therefore, the achievement of literacy comprises a set of culturally regulated competencies that specify not only what is known but also what is normatively valued, disapproved of and approved of, by adults' perceptions in a particular context. (Kewseenual, 2018).

According to thinkers in most modern democracies, digital literacy is needed to transform technological practices to support an understanding of political and social justice (Emejulu & Mcgregor, 2019). However, it is a problem that digital literacy in education is often narrowly defined as merely a matter of the acquisition of technical skills (Buckingham, 2010; Buckingham, 2015). Cappello (2017) has also pointed out the limitations of digital literacy education as developed by public authorities and private companies according to their own policy agendas. Consequently, digital literacy is a social construction within specific educational settings, so that children may be defined as having good digital literacy in the context of different cultures. The ability to access, analyse, evaluate and create as a cultural competence implies learning within, and being part of, a digital culture (Buckingham, 2006).

The recent research undertaken by EU Kids Online project argued that 'risks' and 'opportunities' are not entirely separate ways of thinking about ICT, but instead are interconnected as a way of interpreting the complicated situations of actual ICT use (Livingstone et al, 2011 as cited in Kaewseenual, 2018). Thus, the discussion of online risk should not only revolve around where and how often children are exposed to risk, but also how well they cope with risk experiences and their practical and emotional ability to cope with these risks. In this approach, children are positioned as competent learners who must encounter some degree of risk, though not risk which exceeds their capacity to cope, in order for them to become resilient in their specific life context

(d'Haenens, Vandoninck, & Donoso, 2013; Livingstone & Smith, 2014; Third, Forrest-Lawrence, & Collier, 2014; Wojniak & Majorek, 2016). Children have to be positioned as competent citizens so they have to be treated by the social institutions as if they have the competence to be digitally resilient. Therefore, we emphasize the importance of design solutions that foster teen resilience and strength building, as opposed to solutions targeted toward parents that often focus on restriction and risk prevention (Wisniewski P. et al, 2015). The promise is that this will better ground policy developments that advance both child protection, and also positive provisions as well as opportunities for children's participation in the digital culture. However, it is a challenge for Thailand to conceptualize educational philosophy, policy, and practice to enhance digital resiliency for children in Thai context.

Children as incompetent citizens in relation to risk in digital environment

Internationally, there have been an increasing number of questions regarding the consequence of Internet use leading to complex arguments over the 'effect' of children's Internet use. Thus, the perception of online risk is relative to how risk is approached in the public perception among policy makers, researchers, parent and teachers, etc). Particularly, the study of Stakrude (2016) who argued that online risk is contextualization. The translation from online risks to online harm has framed by national 'system' (left) of socioeconomic, technological, educational and cultural factors.

Kaewseenual (2018) has demonstrated that Thai children were often restricted by adults to homogeneous categories designed to be protective in the context of digital literacy education. Regulation and

safety technologies were put in place to restrict children's vulnerability to harm but at the same time their opportunities for exercising active participation, exploration, and creativity were also restricted. Typically, children were positioned as incompetent persons who need to be protected from harm. In relation to online media, children were seen as passive recipients that online adults attempted to control and manipulate. To change this position, they need to either struggle for autonomy or to resist adult authority, which Thai children in particular find difficult to do. This finding clearly demonstrated schooling digital literacy in state school.

A study by Warat (2016) found that the negative effects of digital media on youngsters could be divided into 8 categories as follows: (1) Deceptions; (2) Inappropriate Content; (3) Online Mischief; (4) Dissatisfaction caused by digital media usage; (5) Misunderstanding or being misled caused by digital media usage; (6) Unconstructive use of time; (7) Violation of laws; and (8) Inappropriate behavior caused by digital media. He also identified a further 30 sub-categories of possible negative effects. In the short term, he argued that there should be laws to regulate and reduce the risks of digital media usage. In the long term, all relevant parties must hurry to build "media literacy" and "digital literacy" for youngsters (Warat, 2016) so that, in effect, they become self-policing in regard to digital media use. Cyberbullying and hate speech are other recent topics with likely negative effects that are the concerns of the policy makers and researchers. For example Samoh, et al (2019) claimed that youth defined cyberbullying as harming others through mobile phones or the Internet. Thus, to count as cyberbullying, such actions had to cause real harm or annoyance and be committed with malicious intent (Samoh et al, 2019).

The moral panic and a perception of children as incompetent are the key barriers to implementing media literacy that goes beyond policing into the realm of personal and social development in Thailand. This is the fear of media risks, actually.

However, this protective attitude is not unique to Thai society. Anxiety about negative media effects can cause adults in many territories to position children as passive and vulnerable. For instance, the study of Facer (2012) which examined the initial 'moral panic' surrounding children's access to the Internet on the British context, at the end of the last century by analysing more than 900 media articles and key government documents from 1997 to 2001. She questioned whether it should be time to reframe the debate about children's occupation of online public space, such as less in terms of 'care' for children's needs - that tends to result in exclusionary and surveillance strategies - and more in terms of children's rights and capacities to engage in democratic debates over the nature of an online public space in which they have been already participated. Such question also involves recognizing children as having potential to be competent, and active participants in media use (Buckingham, 2013).

Since the existence of risk is automatically equated with harm, therefore, adult perceptions of children's Internet use will focus on danger and restrict them in the service of morality and safety as defined by adults. The opinion of risk always mean harm inhibits children from encountering risks and deprives them of their capacities of assessment the difference between risks and hazards. Facer pointed out that children's rights and capacities to engage in democratic practices are stunted if they are deprived of their capacity to assess risks themselves (Facer, 2012). While these adult tendencies to delimit children's

experiences may be found anywhere, there is also the case that online risks are contextualized by particular ideologies about childhood in different cultures.

From an approbatory viewpoint, digital media are seen as democratic rather than authoritarian, diverse rather than homogeneous, and participatory rather than passive (Buckingham, 2013). They enable young people to interpret and make informed judgments as consumers of media and also provide the opportunity for them to become producers of media in their own right. Buckingham (2000) mentioned that when children go online, they are more autonomous and critical as audience members and active participants than they are passive victims of what they may encounter. When children use the internet, they become critical users of information. They can develop a strong sense of their own autonomy and authority as competent learners in online (adult) world. Ideally, media education is about developing young people's critical and creative abilities as both consumers and producers. Therefore, it can be said that if they are prepared to exercise their power in the digital media, they are learning (and often teaching themselves) to become 'active citizens' and capable of exercising thoughtful choice in political matters.

Hence, digital literacy needs to connect with learners' identities, including social and cultural practices, providing the possibility of integrating new with established practices. Considering national and social mediations and those of children themselves are therefore important in developing children's digital literacies.

The contestation of childhood ideologies around digital literacy education

National, social, and children's mediations themselves are shaped by teachers' values (Devine, 2000) and take a defining role in developing children's digital literacy. If we look carefully into the national curriculum, we will notice that there is a contrast between the identities that global and local constructions offer for Thai children. The Basic Education Core Curriculum is aimed at enhancing the capacity of all learners to have competency of digital citizenship. More importantly, it also attempts to mould young Thai people to have desirable characteristics such as love of the nation, religion and the king, honesty and integrity, cherishing Thai-ness and public-mindedness.

"[...] Thai children and youth in the 21st century. Emphases have been placed on morality, preference for Thai-ness, skills in analytical and creative thinking, technological know-how, capacity for teamwork and ability to live in peace and harmony in the world community (Ministry of Education, 2008).

It was found that not only Thai children are expected to be 'good children' according to the mores of the seniority culture, they are also expected to be competent citizens in the 21st century context. The study of Kaewseenual (2018) demonstrated that even though the digital literacy module developed by the researcher used broadly similar techniques in both state and private schools, the different assumptions in each environment resulted in children engaging in different digital media practices, and the teaching schemes of digital literacy were different between public and private school environments. In public schools, digital literacy teaching scheme was framed by seniority values where the children were positioned

as passive recipients of the teacher's superior knowledge, while in private schools, due to the greater cosmopolitan mobility that parents desire for their offspring, the children were positioned as competent learners who can be active citizens for the 21st century.

"Both schools idealize the child in similar way. The proscriptive orientation seeks to protect this idealized child. The proactive orientation seeks to encourage this idealized child. The children in the public school are constructed to be 'dek dee' for seniority culture, while the students of the private school are produced to be good citizen for international policy" (as cited in Kaewseenual, 2018).

In these conditions, it was found that digital literacy is not seen merely as a kind of cognitive proficiency that enables people to understand and use media. The ability to evaluate and use information critically and transform it into knowledge is framed again, by Thai childhood ideologies relating to the online-risk definition of adults. In state schools, Thai children are constructed by the seniority value embedded in Thai culture where adult assessments of situations prevail. The children are taught to enhance more morally healthy forms of behaviour, or in a more intellectual context, to develop politically correct beliefs about the meaning of being a 'good citizen' for the 21st century. In the digital literacy class in the state school, a seniority orientation in classroom teaching is explicit. These results revealed that the teacher positions themselves as the central authority of knowledge in digital literacy schooling. The moral quality of 'appropriate behaviour', shaped according to the teacher's perception, is the hidden curriculum that can be observed in the classroom.

On the contrary, the study confirmed that the digital literacy in the Thai private school system has been framed by 21st century

concepts. Children who show their competence and independence as autonomous citizens are the successful production from this style of schooling. Accordingly, the teacher played the role of allowing children to realize their own power. Questions from the teacher were not asked for the purposes of judging but to encourage children to think about all possibilities. In private schools, the independent learner is a pedagogic achievement, while in public schools, obedient children are the successful outcome of learning.

The study's finding was that both types of school functions according to singular ideologies in digital literacy schooling, although from different cultural perspectives. In the private school, the students are framed by a 21st century citizen discourse adopted from global agencies that values independence, while the 'good child' for Thai society is shaped by the seniority culture in traditional state school classrooms. This is in line with Tesar (2014) who stated that Children are governed by hegemonic and resistant discourses in any ideological setting (Tesar, 2014).

For the broader context, the research of De Neve (2015) which studied how variety of childhood experiences may have a differential effect on subsequent political positioning or allied with a respondent's personality profile. He assumed that differences in political ideology are deeply intertwined with variation in the nature and nurture of individual personalities. This was in accord with the research of Yang and Li (2018) who studied cultural ideology in the School-based Curriculum (SCB) in Hong Kong and Shenzhen kindergartens. They found that the unique characteristics of SBC practices in each society were shaped by different social contexts in different ways (Yang & Li, 2018). Edward and Cutter-Mackenzie (2011), who studied the concept

of child-centred learning, reported that the role of environmental education in an early childhood curriculum, for example, was framed in relation to the national framework of education.

The changing view of media education

It is interesting to find out that in the offline world children are framed in terms of singular ideologies from local and international agencies. However, as noted previously, the online world is seen as democratic rather than authoritarian, diverse rather than homogeneous, participatory rather than passive (Buckingham, 2013). Therefore young people are able to interpret and make informed judgments as consumers of media and also able to become producers of media in their own right.

Some Thai children have created their own definitions of risk from their own experiences and contexts. This is evident from the research result of Kaewseenual (2018) which investigated whether online media raises the public's perception about online risks through the diffusion of moral panic around violence and sexual content, as an agenda in public policy in Thailand. In an online world some children can discover their own critical abilities to realize the signs of potential harm from online strangers and another child can learn to deal with online violence using their coping capacities and growing digital resilience. When children exploring things on the internet, they are learning to have strong sense of their own autonomy and authority as competent learners in an online (adult) world, where they are producers as well as consumers. Therefore, media education is the process of developing young people's critical and creative abilities as consumers and producers.

Children are likely to become ‘active citizens’, capable of exercising thoughtful choice in political matters if they are enabled to exercise their power in the digital media. Some of them enact competent digital citizenship in their own way that fits with their own circumstances.

While in the offline world Thai governmental and education authorities develop measures to protect children from harm. It is evident that Thai authorities have imposed laws and policies to protect children from being vulnerable to online harm. For example, in 2008, there were news reports about children killed by a taxi driver. A reporter claimed that the cause of this murder came from the effect of GTA (Grand Theft Auto) game. Subsequently, the Film and Video Act 2008 was enacted such as youth under 15 could only remain in gaming cafés until 8 p.m. In 2016, after the Pokémon Go launched in Thailand, Thai adults such as policy makers, lawyers, polices, teachers, employers and doctors expressed anxieties about the negative consequences of playing this Augmented Reality game. Thai authorities then imposed a ‘No-go Zone’ policy to protect citizens from dangers and negative effects from playing the game in some educational setting (Kaewseenual, 2018).

If children are deprived of their opportunities to encounter some degree of risk, this might limit their ability to expand their coping capacity to become digitally resilient (Livingstone et al., 2011; Vandoninck et al., 2013; Garista & Pocetta, 2014; Vissenberg & d'Haenens, 2020). The risks and benefits of digital participation go hand in hand. But in the first instance, digital participation is required. The challenge, therefore, is to support users to minimize the risks without limiting their digital participation and their capacity to derive the full benefits of connectivity (Third et al., 2014). These recommendations are in accordance with the studies

of children as participant designers in online activities, which revealed that not only can they contribute effectively to design and participation in itself, but also can achieve significant benefits in developing resilience for the young designers (Zelenko & Hamilton, 2008). An approach that acknowledges children's rights to participation seems to be the foundation for resilience (Przybylski et al., 2014; Hammond & Cooper, 2015; Kaewseenual, 2018).

Thus, risk does not automatically mean harm, instead risk means encountering challenging situations that they can use to build the foundation of resilience.

Independent policy and practice of digital literacy for Thai children

We argue that children need the opportunity to engage in exploration, adventure and to encounter online challenges (Tesar, 2017; Kaewseenual, 2018). Particularly, they need the freedom to explore risky opportunities on an individual level in order to build digital resilience, which is a necessary skill for digital citizens. Adults have the responsibility to care for children but it is also important to support children's capacity to cope with the adult world by themselves, thereby building resilience for digital (and democratic) citizens. Parental mediation and digital literacy schooling are important to build up digital resilience, however there is a need to keep balance between protection and participation.

The EU Kids Online network examined how children use the Internet and mobile technologies. The findings demonstrated that: First, the chance of a child's gaining benefits depends on age, gender, and socioeconomic status, on how parents support that child,

and on the positive content available to a child; Second, the chance of a child's being harmed by online experiences depends on the same demographic factors, plus that children's resilience and resources to cope and the parental mediation they receive, their socio-demographic, culture, behavioral, and psychological factors (Li, 2010; Görzig, 2019; Livingstone, 2019).

Fejes et al (2013) argued that there are two major difficulties in current discourses of citizenship education. The first is a relative masking of student discourses of citizenship by positioning students as lacking citizenship and as outside the community that acts. The second is in failing to understand the discursive and material support for citizenship activity. We, thus, argue that it is not a lack of citizenship that education research might address, but identification and exploration of the different forms of citizenship that students have already engaged in (Nicoll et al., 2013; Smith et al., 2016; Tesar, 2016). Encountering some degree of online risks provides children with opportunities to discover and refine their own abilities and methods in dealing with risks, whereas in offline teaching, children in private school are typically shaped by one standard of digital literacy as defined by the OECD-UNESCO.

Biesta (2015) argued that standardization provides to narrow a framing for education. Thus, what is a quality and what is a good standard for children are determined by international agencies. The international agencies' discourse, however, is often based on universalist assumptions. As a result, one-size-fits-all model is often promoted, which may not fit with all contexts because they are based on universalist thinking about development, human capacities and productivity (Kaewseenual, 2018).

Moreover, Thailand has added the idea and practice of digital citizenship to the model of digital literacy which is called MIDL (Media Information Digital Literacy) and is aimed at helping Thai children to think critically as democratic citizens. However, Nicoll et al. (2013) argued that there are two major difficulties in current discourses of citizenship education. The first is a relative masking of student discourses of citizenship by positioning students as lacking citizenship and as outside the community that acts. The second is in failing to understand the discursive and material support for citizenship activity. We, thus, argue that it is not a lack of citizenship that education research might address, but identification and exploration of the different forms of citizenship that students have already engaged in (Nicoll et al., 2013; Smith et al., 2016; Tesar 2016).

Instead, education should be a liberated space that lets children encounter risks to discover their own identity - that is 'the beautiful risk of education' (Biesta, 2015). He stated that the space for teacher judgement is being threatened by recent developments in educational policy and practice which are too concerned with the status of the student, the impact of accountability, and the role of evidence (Biesta, 2015).

We propose a more fully social account of the relationship between children and the media, which situates our analysis of the audience within a broader understanding of social, institutional and historical change. We should expect that children will have different 'media literacies' – or different modalities of literacy – which are required by the different social situations they encounter, and that will in turn have different social function and consequences. We should acknowledge that individuals have 'histories' of media experiences that may be activated in particular ways in particular social contexts, or by particular

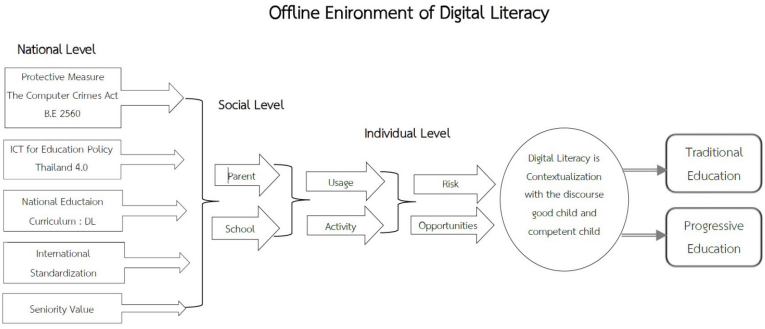
literacy events. Thailand, will need to position itself within local contexts while deriving critically assessed conceptual insights – rather than universal truths – from international research that serves the development agenda

Conclusion

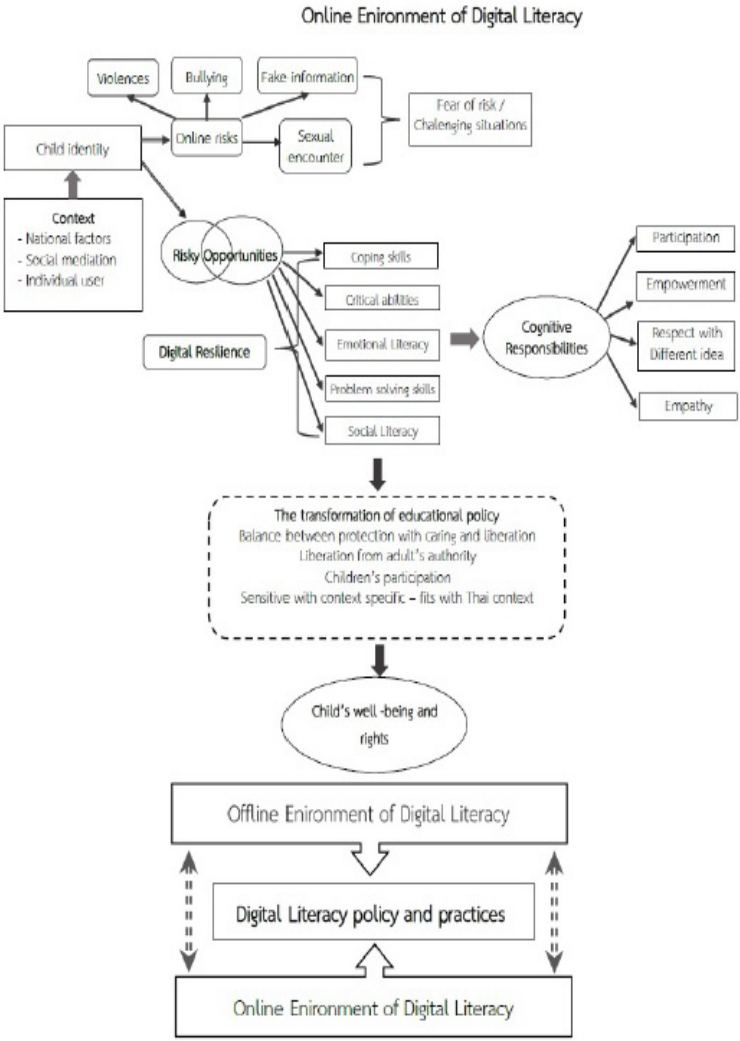
Thailand brings into sharp focus the question of adult perception of the child and these perceptions affect educational attitudes, practices from national education policy, towards the extension of digital literacy education in school setting. In addition, the concept of protectionist from top down policy has an impact on the perception of online risks relating from mediation and media literacy in Thailand. The tension of digital literacy between universalization and localization from national curriculum, educational practices and the international evaluation of digital literacy in Thailand has been disputed. The international standard has brought out a unique set of concerns and considerations for the policy makers at the state level to impose a digital literacy program in Thai schooling that is not made sensitive with cultural differences and national interests. Thus, the digital literacy practices demonstrate the contest of childhood ideology in Thailand.

However, it was found that risk does not mean harm in the children's perception. When children encounter some degree of online risks, most of them are continuously testing themselves about how to know about their level of competence and acceptable risks that they can cope with. Engaging children to encounter risky opportunities will enhance the children's critical thinking abilities and their capacity to cope for themselves with resilience. This depends on the digital ecology

support or deprive resilient citizen. The study suggested that Digital literacy educational policy needs to be transformed to liberate children from overly rigid, and risk-adverse, classroom practice, thus contributing to the development of responsible digital citizenship. However, Digital Literacy is not seen here merely as a kind of cognitive proficiency that enables people to understand and use media. We should expect that children will have different 'media literacies' – or different modalities of literacy – that are required by the different social situations they encounter, and that will in turn have different social functions and consequences. Adults such as policy makers need to listen to their voices that impact on children's learning, development and well-being in online uses as well as how to decide digital ecology that empower children for the responsibility of coping themselves and grown them up with cognitive responsibilities. However, it is a challenge for Thailand to conceptualize educational philosophy, policy, and practice to enhance digital literacy to fit with Thai context. Further research is needed, on how these things might be achieved. As show in the model below,



Adapted from Analytical model of factors shaping children's experiences of online activity of Staksrud (2016)


Online Enironment of Digital Literacy
Violences
Bullying
Fake information
Fear of risk / Challenging situations
Child identity
Online risks
Sexual encounter
Context
- National factors
- Social mediation
- Individual user
Risky Opportunities
Coping skills
Critical abilities
Emotional Literacy
Problem solving skills
Social Literacy
Digital Resilience
Cognitive Responsibilities
Participation
Empowerment
Respect with Different idea
Empathy
The transformation of educational policy
Balance between protection with caring and liberation
Liberation from adult's authority
Children's participation
Sensitive with context specific – fits with Thai context
Child's well -being and rights
Offline Enironment of Digital Literacy
Digital Literacy policy and practices
Online Enironment of Digital Literacy

Suggestion

1. Digital Schooling: Digital literacy is more than simply a matter of protecting children from the dangers of digital media, but children need to be empowered to make informed choices on their own behalf, and to cope themselves, thereby building resilience with cognitive responsibilities as digital citizens. This study suggests that Thailand should have educational practices such as actual classroom and educational tools that allow children encountering some degree of online risks by designing as problem-based learning or case studies to learn to be digital resilience. However, there are several factors that link harm with personality indicators (sensation-seeking, low self-esteem, psychological difficulties), social factors (lack of parental support, peer norms), and digital factors (kind of sites, apps, etc.). It is noted that when children encounter online risks, the translation of risk to harm or resilience, the social and individual users are needed to study and identify.

2. Educators: The teachers need to understand the concept of digital media as well as the concept of digital resilience consisting with risky opportunities and recognize children as competence learner and participation, etc. More importantly, they should be trained about digital resilience for young children and be able to identify and prioritize the barriers of building digital resilience as well as be able to design teaching and learning activities to overcome those barriers.

3. Policy makers

3.1 The policy maker needs to bring children's voices into consideration in imposing any policy of digital media uses. It is important to take into account the children's requirement in relation to their involvement in policy making.

3.2 Not one size fits for scaling digital literacy and digital resilience competencies. Thus, the effective of digital literacy is different according to particular context. The study suggests that there should be further researches in order to understand digital environment of such area to decide policy module to fit with the context. In addition, context-specific and socio-cultural dynamics should be prioritized in development. Moreover, Thailand, need to position itself within local contexts while deriving critically assessed conceptual insights – rather than universal truths. The digital literacy and digital resilience based on Thai wisdom is recommended for further study.

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