Using ICT, digital and social media in youth work

A review of local research findings from Denmark

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Conclusion and recommendations

The report studies are generally characterised by the fact that IT and digital and social media are overall regarded as one positive dimension that can be added to educational and social work.

IT and digital and social media are specifically used to facilitate communication among professionals and between professionals and young people in order to create a better dialogue and provide information. Generally, there are many good intentions to use IT and media in educational and social work, but it is necessary to make a continuous effort to get it implemented in everyday life at the various workplaces concerned with children and young people.

By examining the questionnaire and the focus groups, it is evident that IT and media create easy and efficient communication. IT and media are primarily used as contact-making tools in the work with young people (planning and communication). A number of respondents and participants in the focus groups have realised that if they want to connect with the young people and do so successfully, then it is going to take place on their terms, even though it might feel strange and challenging for the adults to communicate and interact digitally.

In all the focus groups, the general opinion was that one cannot do without IT and social and digital media when working with children and young people whose everyday lives today are linked to online media. In order to succeed with the use of IT, there is an expressed necessity to create an overall framework of how professionals can make use of IT and social and digital media to make it as effective as possible. Many participants feel that it is up to the individual employee to determine to what extent they want to make use of IT and digital and social media.

IT creates new opportunities for contact with young people and can provide professionals with useful knowledge about the young people which they would not otherwise have obtained.

legal aspects.

The focus group participants all agreed that it is very important to be critical of the use of IT and media in their work and reflect on the conducted selection and deselection which also applies to young people. For a large part of the respondents in the survey, it is important that children and young people are aware of their digital identity and how they relate to their behaviour on the Internet.

On a completely low-practical level, the work with IT and media also requires enough available equipment and that the equipment in question works. It creates a vulnerable situation when the work depends on technology in cases where it does not function properly. A small part of the people, we have been in contact with in connection with the report, find it hard to get started with using IT and media. This can be explained by the fact that they themselves mainly have to take the lead regarding the use of it in their work and at the same time, it can be a cumbersome and time-consuming task if the technologies are not working.

In the focus groups with the young people, it became clear that before IT should be used in teaching, it must be used continuously since the young people also sense whether the teacher believes that IT in class is of any value.
For the young people, IT and media can be used as alternative production forms in which they can communicate and present content, but where the focus is moved from the young people themselves and onto the digital product they have made.

Furthermore, the young people can advantageously be informed and activated even more with respect to online ethics in order to make them aware of how their digital online activities have consequences and may influence others or themselves. They must possess the tools to manage their online behaviour, and when they experience unpleasant incidents on the Internet. This can be achieved by continuously addressing these issues – both regarding the occurrence of incidents and as part of the young people's general formation. In the focus group with the young people, we got the impression that it is not enough to talk to the young people about the "traffic rules" on the Internet. The young people need to work actively with these rules, for example through case studies which create identification. By touching on close and relevant topics that create familiarity, the "traffic rules" become relevant to the young people and this ultimately generates a greater reflection in relation to their digital behaviour.

For the participants in the focus groups, it is important that young people are informed about online ethics and their digital behaviour – both where there are pitfalls and where there are opportunities.

The teachers in the focus groups were positively inclined towards the use of IT and media in their work and believe that a general upgrading of skills is needed in order for them to use IT and media in the most valuable way. Hands-on courses should be conducted where the professionals can gain practical experiences with IT and thus learn how it can be used in practice.

None of the participants in the focus groups had received direct and continuous training in the use of IT and digital and social media. The participants identify a problem that IT courses are often isolated and short and only consist of presentations and thus do not provide them with practical experience. Therefore, many of the participants in the focus groups experience that the use of IT and media in their work is left up to them and is based on experiences they already have. The case study about day care centres, the survey and the focus groups have made it evident that an upgrading of skills among professionals is necessary in order for IT and media to gain a foothold in educational and social work. It is crucial that it does not turn into sole projects where only passionate activists become the driving force.
The professionals must be introduced to the different tools depending on the purpose. There is also a need for generally applicable efforts at the workplace and it is important to devise an IT strategy, both for municipal and private organisations, with respect to implementation, training, educational practices as well as ethical and

1 Upgrading of pedagogical employees

The case studies, the survey and the focus groups have made it evident that an upgrading of skills among professionals is necessary in order for IT and media to gain a foothold in educational and social work. It is crucial that it does not turn into sole projects where only passionate activists become the driving force.

2 Municipalities must establish clear and detailed strategies for the digital pedagogical work

The professionals must be introduced to the different tools depending on the purpose. There is also a need for generally applicable efforts at the workplace and it is important to devise an IT strategy, both for municipal and private organisation, with respect to implementation, training, educational practices as well as ethical and legal aspects.

3 Increased dialogue with vulnerable children and young people about their use of the Internet

It is very important to be critical of the use of IT and media in the professionals works and reflect on the conducted selection and deselection which also applies to young people. It is important that children and young people are aware of their digital identity and how they relate to their behaviour on the internet.

4 Access to rapid network connections and new technology must be upgraded

On a completely low-practical level, the work with IT and media also requires enough available equipment and that the equipment in question works.

Introduction

Screenagers is an international project that explores the use of information and communication technologies in youth work. The Youth Council of Northern Ireland is responsible for the project which is based on a perceived reluctance towards the use of digital tools in educational practices. Center for Digital Pædagogik (Center for Digital Youth Care) is part of the project together with Youth Council for Northern Ireland, National Youth Council of Ireland, Verke from Finland and WienXtra from Austria.

The project also intends to create a forum for knowledge sharing across Europe. The objective is to remedy the lack of knowledge concerning the use of IT – both on a political, organisational and practical level. At Center for Digital Pædagogik, we are interested in how digital and social media can be used in educational practices. We wish to share our own experiences in the field and at the same time gain insights into other countries' experiences and challenges. In this way, it will be possible to strengthen and develop the digital educational work.

With the report, we wish to identify the tendencies and issues experienced from the use of IT in educational work with children and young people. The purpose is to gain an insight into the challenges, benefits and values experienced by professionals in the field.

Methodical approach

All five participating countries have worked on the same research questions, and the methods providing the basis for the survey have been commonly defined.

The research questions revolve around the use of social and digital media in youth work, the purpose and value in the use of social media in youth work and the types of digital media used. In addition, the focus is on existing challenges and how to overcome them, while the last topic is about how professionals are equipped to use IT, what kind of support is necessary in order for them to feel able to use digital and social media successfully in their work and how all of this is being evaluated.

Questionnaire

We have sent electronic questionnaires to several municipalities as well as private and public institutions. Based on the desire for a high response rate, we predefined possible answers to all questions and made it possible to add a response.

We have differentiated between 1) social media and 2) IT and digital media, although social media belongs to the latter category. We have done so because the survey has a distinct focus on the role that social media plays in young people's lives.

Respondents are a mix of people from the public and private sector – the majority are professionals employed in the public sector which represents 86% of total responses. Respondents are mainly working within the informal part of the youth sector and cover a wide range of work areas in the youth field. The majority are busy with counselling and guidance while some others work at after school care facilities (SFOs) and drop-in centres, at shelters and other kinds of centres.

The target group will be further presented in the section about the survey where an overview will also show the respondents' work domains.

Focus group interview

As a qualitative element in the survey, we organised five focus group meetings with the aim to support and explain the results of the questionnaire. In order to reach as many people as possible in relation to the theme of the survey, we chose two different target groups: professionals within educational and social work as well as students from a special school. The themes in the focus groups were the same as in the questionnaire. There was another angle in the conversations with the young people where it was more about the interaction between *the media at school and in the free time, the view of their skills* and *online ethics.*

Case studies

At the end of the report, we will highlight three cases which depicts how the media and IT can be used in youth work – both in innovative ways and in more established working practices.

The cases are based on observation and the involvement of young people through questionnaires in order to get their perspectives on the situation.
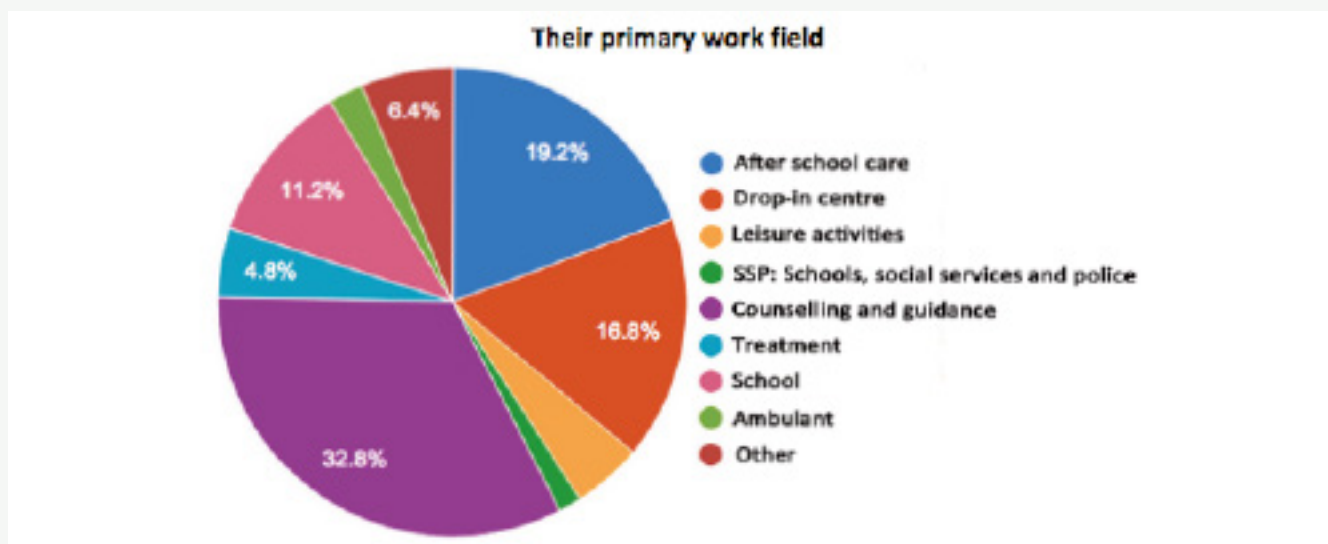
Questionnaire
survey

The questionnaire was sent out to professionals in the youth sector, and we (CfDP) have received 125 responses. In the questionnaire, we made it clear that we were interested in gaining an overall and general picture of the use of IT and not only receive inputs from super users. However, we expected that those who would complete the questionnaire would be professionals who already made use of IT and social and digital media in their work, and who would thus be largely positive.

Through processing the responses, it became clear that respondents were neither purely positive or negative towards the inclusion of IT in their activities, which contributes to a balanced picture of the professionals' attitude to IT and social and digital media in their educational practices.

Questionnaires always have a built-in factor of uncertainty with respect to misunderstandings. We tried to take this into account by formulating closed questions and by adding a text to define concepts. For several of the questions, the respondents had the opportunity to choose several possible answers, so the total number of responses may in some cases exceed the total number of 125 responses.

Denmark has a large public sector; therefore it is only natural that 86% of the responses came from professionals employed in the public sector. Large parts of the school system and other advisory and supportive initiatives in the youth sector are handled by the government. The questionnaire was also sent to various youth centres, educational organisations and similar fields where the many private initiatives are not numerous.

Their primary work field

Pie chart legend:
- After school care — 19.2%
- Drop-in centre — 16.8%
- Leisure activities
- SSP: Schools, social services and police
- Counselling and guidance — 32.8%
- Treatment — 4.8%
- School — 11.2%
- Ambulant
- Other — 6.4%

The two largest work areas represented in the survey are counselling and guidance. The work areas complement each other and provide a varied insight into both the work with maladjusted young people having difficulties of gaining perspective, and in the daily work with children and young people in municipal recreational programmes. The second largest work area represented in the survey is after school care (SFOs) and drop-in centres.
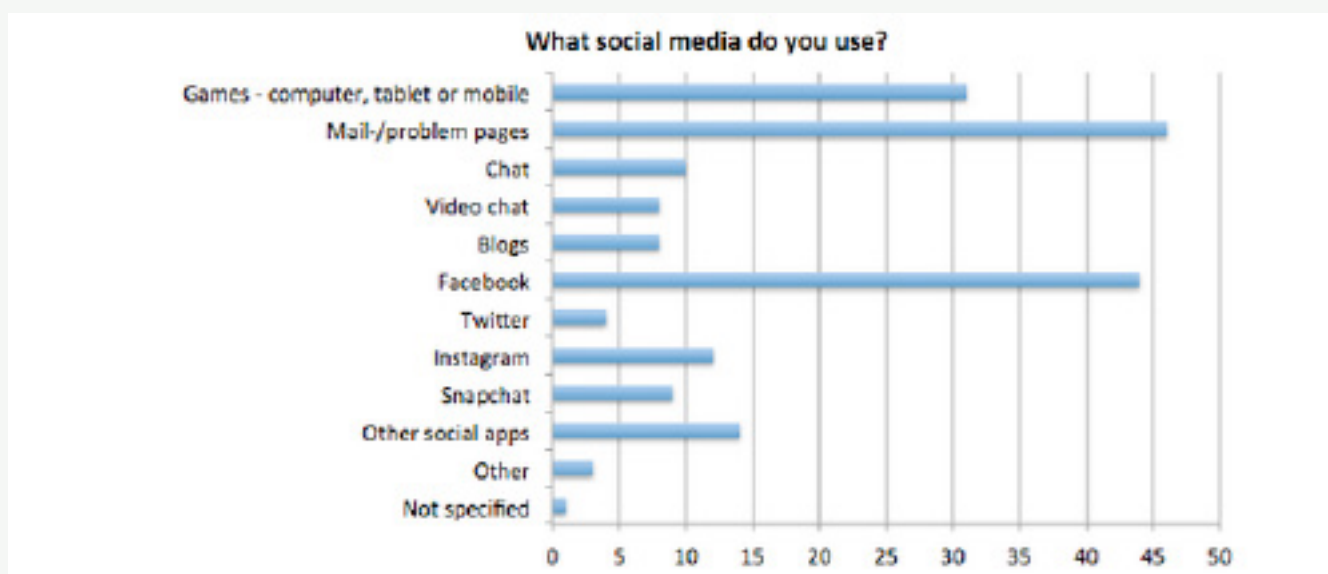
The young people are widely distributed – from young people with difficulties to those without – compared to the represented areas. It may be relevant for the kind of IT being used, how to use it and for what purposes. In e.g. SFOs and drop-in centres, IT may be centred on dedicated activities and not counselling, support and guidance.

Social media

Social media falls under the designation digital media, but we have chosen to examine these areas separately to learn about the different types of media. The 'social media' in this context covers the apps or other online activities where there is communication between young people, between the adults and the young people or between professionals. This could be a problem page, chat or apps such as Facebook and Instagram.

More than half of the respondents are using social media. Of the total number of 125 responses, 75 respondents are using social media whereas 50 are not.
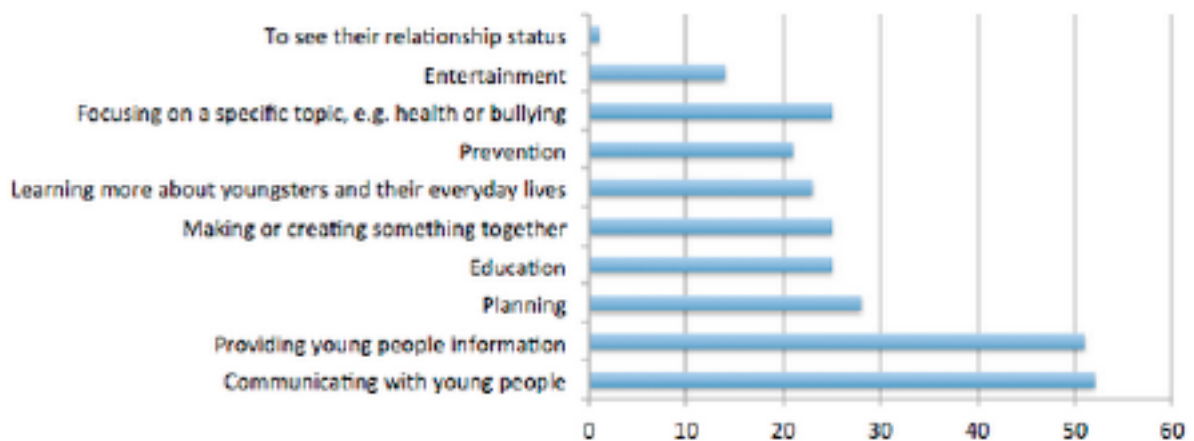

Within educational and social work, it is clear which social media are used the most; these are mail/problem pages, Facebook and games.
41% of the respondents, who make use social media, play games of various kinds – either in the direct work with young people or as part of the professionals' activities with the young people. 19% and 11% of all responses come from SFOs and drop-in centres as well as schools. The reason that games are high up on the list may be that playing computer games is a popular leisure activity and that games of various kinds are gaining ground in schools.
The three media and forms of communication that are used the most are also the ones for which the general level of awareness is high.
Both Facebook and mail/problem page systems are largely used for communication and information purposes, and to create or send out reminders about conversations. Other media, which require a higher degree of interaction and involvement, such as chat, video conversation, and the like, are not used to the same extent. The media being employed a lot by young people – such as Instagram and Snapchat – are not particularly prominent. It is only a small percentage of employees who are using these.

For what purpose do you use social media?

A horizontal bar chart with the following categories (axis 0 to 60):

- To see their relationship status: ~1
- Entertainment: ~14
- Focusing on a specific topic, e.g. health or bullying: ~24
- Prevention: ~20
- Learning more about youngsters and their everyday lives: ~22
- Making or creating something together: ~24
- Education: ~24
- Planning: ~28
- Providing young people information: ~51
- Communicating with young people: ~52

This is also emphasised when asking the professionals about the purpose of the use of social media. It is clear that professionals tend to use them in order to communicate, inform and present information seeing 'conversation' and 'information' top the list. It arises from the fact that social media make it easier to get in touch with young people since the degree of availability is greater.
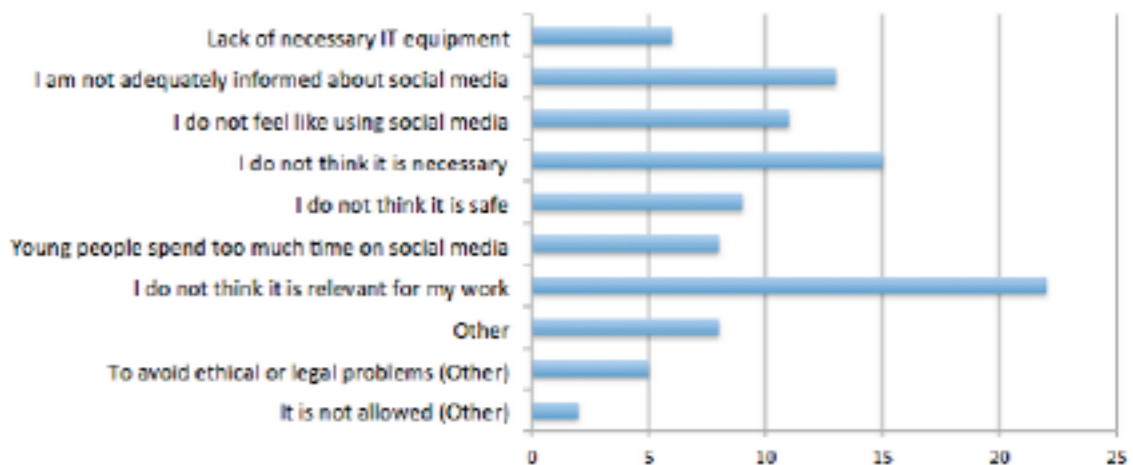
The participants in our focus group interviews mention this aspect as one of the primary reasons and benefits of the use of IT and media in their work.

It is clear that the practical aspects of the respondents' work are what the social media support. It is the classic and traditional forms of interaction and tasks that have always been part of their work with young people, but have moved from being e.g. a phone call to taking place via social media and other communication channels.

It is interesting that almost a third of the respondents use social media to learn about the young people and their everyday lives. Social media are helping to give them an opportunity to get insights into the everyday activities of young people, their existence, relationships and the lives of young people in general. This particular use of social media is more active and specifically aimed at each young person and his/her whereabouts, compared to using social media to schedule consultations and the like.

44% of respondents do not use social media in their work and the chart below shows their reasons for this deselection.

What is the reason you do not use social media?

A horizontal bar chart with the following categories (axis 0 to 25):

- Lack of necessary IT equipment: ~6
- I am not adequately informed about social media: ~13
- I do not feel like using social media: ~11
- I do not think it is necessary: ~15
- I do not think it is safe: ~9
- Young people spend too much time on social media: ~8
- I do not think it is relevant for my work: ~22
- Other: ~8
- To avoid ethical or legal problems (Other): ~5
- It is not allowed (Other): ~2

The main reason why the respondents choose not to make use of social media is that they do not think it makes sense for them in their work. One possible reason could be that 1/3 of the respondents work with counselling and guidance and do not perceive social media as useful in counselling work which the respondents in the focus groups also mention. They say that it is not always appropriate to use social media in their work since the children and young people seeking the help do not wish to be recognised.
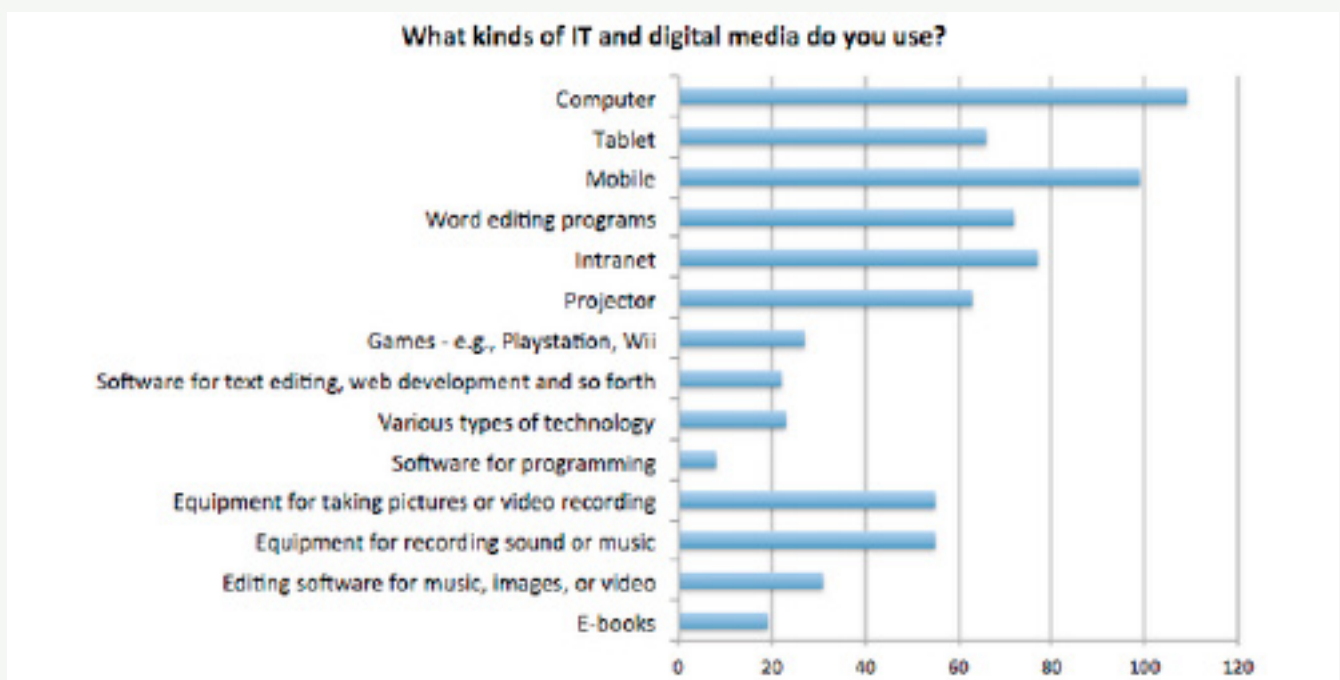
For some social media, it is not possible for the young people to remain anonymous and they may not want to show the world that they make use of the counselling offers. This may be an obvious reason why professionals express that *it does not make sense for their work*, that they have *no wish to use social media*, or, that they *do not think it is necessary*.

In addition, many of the respondents have deselected social media because they feel insecure and believe they lack the knowledge which in turn means that they will avoid any ethical or legal issues. They do not feel confident that their work is taking place through these channels. Any benefits from the use of social media are here obscured by uncertainty and insecurity.

IT and digital media

IT and digital media cover both applications and tools that do not fall under the category of 'social media' in the previous theme. This can be tools used in the interaction between young people, between the adult and the young people, or as a tool in relation to colleagues.
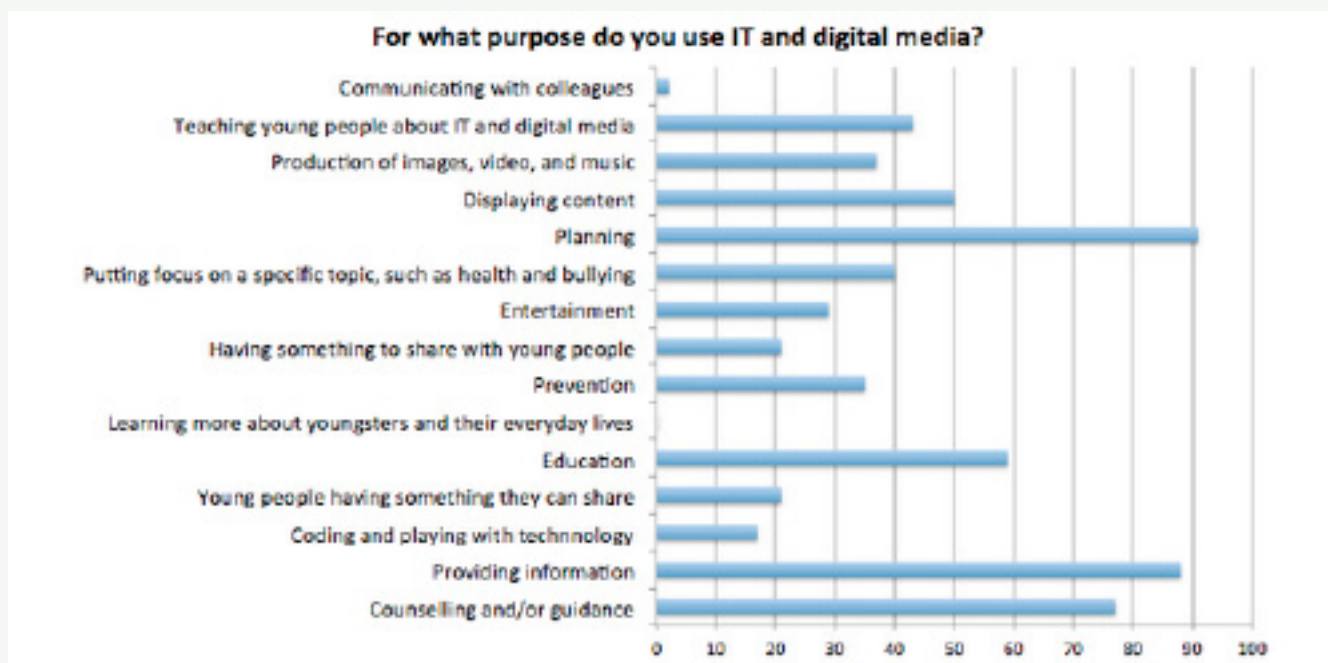
The survey shows that 94% of all respondents use IT and digital media in their daily work with children and young people. The small amount of no-responses indicates that IT is a major part of the work with children and young people in Denmark and is also an applied tool for documentation and communication with the individual or within a personnel group.

What kinds of IT and digital media do you use?

Category	Value (approx.)
Computer	110
Tablet	65
Mobile	100
Word editing programs	72
Intranet	78
Projector	62
Games - e.g., Playstation, Wii	28
Software for text editing, web development and so forth	22
Various types of technology	24
Software for programming	8
Equipment for taking pictures or video recording	55
Equipment for recording sound or music	55
Editing software for music, images, or video	31
E-books	20

Many people use computers, tablets and other common remedies. These are essential work tools as much documentation is carried out electronically. The types of IT most commonly used are tools and programmes that may be necessary for many professionals in their daily lives. There is also a small number of people using IT for programming

purposes who probably work at schools/drop-in centres/other activities. Considering the relatively recent move of cod-ing and various types of IT, technology and programming management into the area of children and young people, it is still interesting that a relatively large number is active within this field. Trends reveal that it is not just about consuming IT but also constructing it.

The use of IT and digital media

For what purpose do you use IT and digital media?

Counselling and guidance are two of the most common activities within IT and media, and this corresponds with being the task handled by most respondents. This is related to the responses 'prevention', 'information' and 'planning' which are often connected to work activities within counselling and guidance.
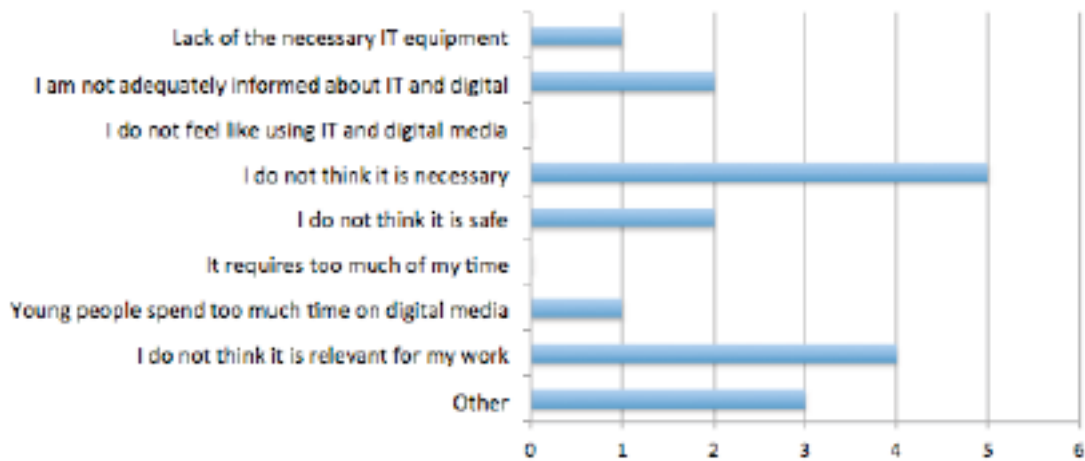This was also emphasised in the focus group interviews with both young people and adults, since it is the fastest and easiest way to get in touch with each other – there is an easy and instant connection, and there is no need to meet in person. 'Accessibility' also comes into play here, as most young people have a smartphone, are active on different media and make use of digital communication.

While 31% of the respondents are using social media to learn about the young people and their everyday lives, no one is using IT and digital media for this purpose. It could for example take place through activities with video, music, tech-nology, games or the like, but it suggests that this category functions more like an actual working tool for professionals rather than a channel through which they gain insight into the young people they work with.
In this connection, some are using IT and digital media to focus on teaching the young people how to use these chan-nels and tools – almost 45 of the 115 respondents are focusing on this topic.

What is the reason you do not use IT and digital media?

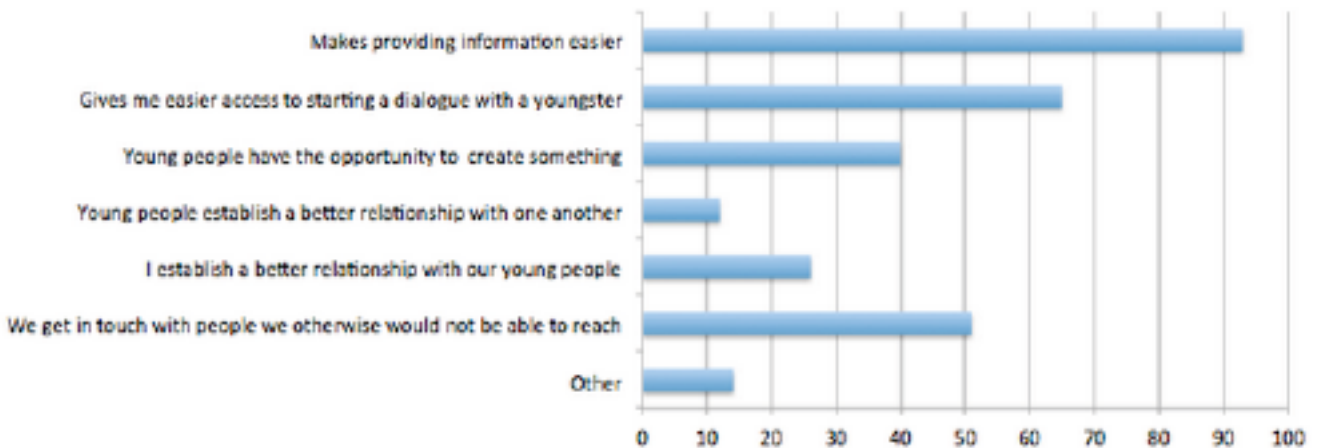| Reason	Value
Lack of the necessary IT equipment	1
I am not adequately informed about IT and digital	2
I do not feel like using IT and digital media	0
I do not think it is necessary	5
I do not think it is safe	2
It requires too much of my time	0
Young people spend too much time on digital media	1
I do not think it is relevant for my work	4
Other	3

Only 6% of all respondents do not use IT and digital media in their work. According to the respondents, the two main reasons for not using IT and digital media are that it is not necessary for their work, and that it makes no sense for their tasks. Half of the respondents indicate that they do not use IT and digital media because they do not deem it necessary for their work. Slightly less than half says that it does not make sense for their work.

None of the respondents do not use IT and digital media because they do not feel like it, or because it takes too much of their time. The motivation is, to a greater extent, based on a lack of IT and the knowledge that it does not make sense or that it is irrelevant or unsafe to use.

Values, criticism and challenges in the use of IT and media

There is a general tendency for respondents to be supportive of the use of IT and media in their work. Less than 10% believe that IT and media are not adding value to their work. The chart below shows how IT and media are adding value:

How do they contribute in a valuable way?

Contribution	Value
Makes providing information easier	93
Gives me easier access to starting a dialogue with a youngster	65
Young people have the opportunity to create something	40
Young people establish a better relationship with one another	11
I establish a better relationship with our young people	27
We get in touch with people we otherwise would not be able to reach	50
Other	13

In the use of IT and digital and social media, two aspects are regarded as most valuable by the respondents. IT and media make it easier for them to 1) provide information 2) get in touch with the young people.

IT and media are thus two factors that generally contribute towards streamlining and optimising the workflows of the respondents. Information sharing does not appear to be a factor that only applies in the actual work with young people. It may also be information internally at the workplace, with other institutions or the like.

The chart shows the purposes for which the respondents use IT and digital media in their work. The majority claim to use these media as a communication and information channel in the work with young people.
Looking at the use of IT and media, these media are not used to create a deeper relationship between the adults and the young people or among the young people. However, about 50 respondents say that IT and media have the potential to provide an opportunity to get in contact with children and young people who they normally have no contact with.
About a third of respondents believe that IT and media can offer new opportunities in connection to their work; among other things, the young people will get a chance to create something (e.g. through games which many of the respondents are making use of).

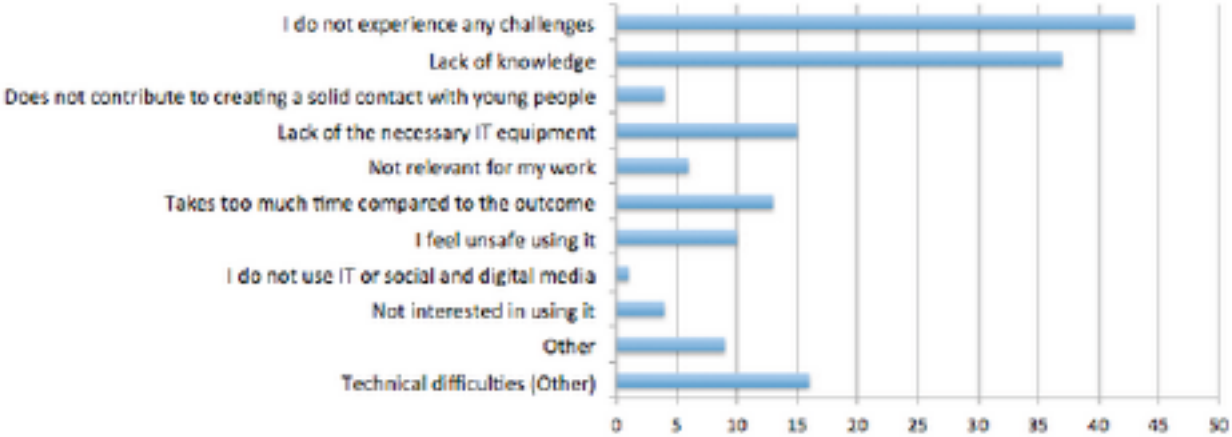**What is the reason IT and social and digital media do not contribute to your work in a valuable way?**

In the questionnaire, we asked the respondents whether they believe that IT and digital and social media contribute to their work; to this question, nine of the 125 respondents replied that IT and digital and social media do not contribute with something valuable to their activities.
In the questionnaire, the respondents were given a number of possible answers to choose from. Therefore, in the above chart, there seems to be more than nine people who do not find it relevant for their work. Most believe that it goes beyond the educational work.

In the survey, we also asked whether the use of IT and digital and social media is being evaluated. Most respondents chose the following two answers; that it is not being evaluated (40%) and that it is being evaluated orally (40%), indicating that evaluation is not a matter of course at all workplaces.

What challenges do you encounter by using IT and digital media in your work?
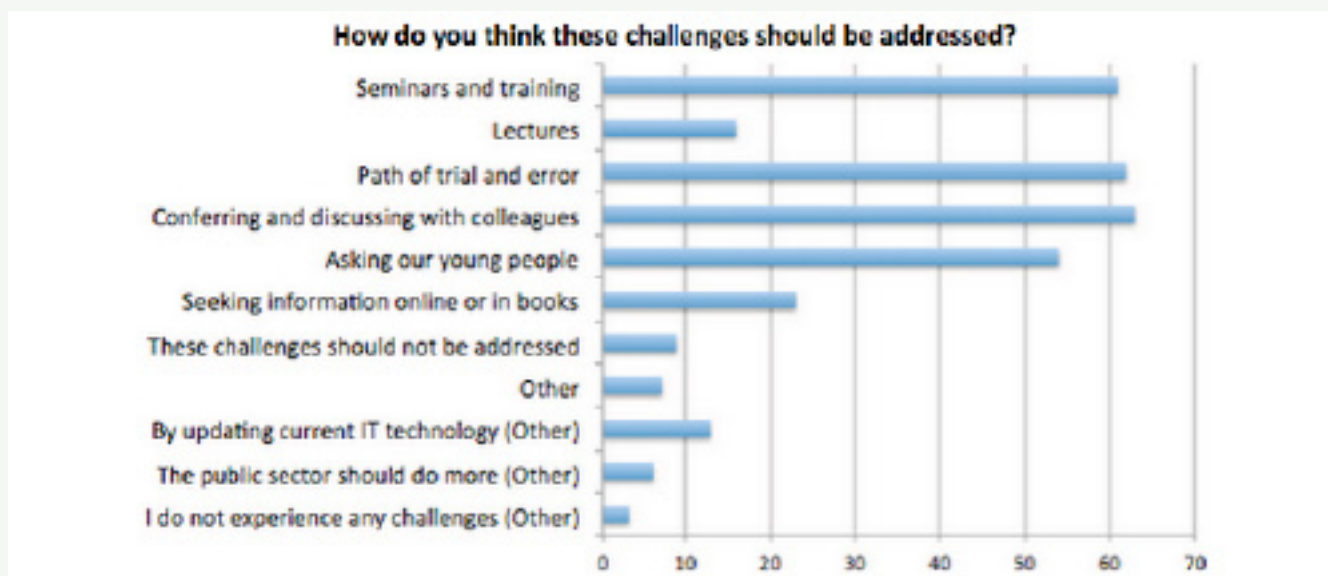
Two-thirds of the survey respondents are experiencing challenges in using digital media and IT in their work. A major challenge among the respondents is the feeling of not having enough knowledge of IT and digital media. In addition, technical difficulties and lack of IT equipment is also a problem.

10 respondents claim to feel unsafe using IT and digital media in their work. This response may entail that they are not well informed about the use of IT and media in their work, including safety aspects.
This indicates that the biggest challenge in the field is a lack of knowledge about the use of IT and digital media, and secondly the experience of practical problems with technology and IT equipment.

The respondents' views on how to address the challenges in using IT and digital media can be seen below:

How do you think these challenges should be addressed?

The respondents largely prefer to participate in training and education sessions to get hands on experience. As much as the respondents believe that training and education will be able to resolve challenges, they also prefer a path of trial and error and conferring with colleagues.

13 of the respondents indicated in the answer option "Other" that the challenges of IT and media can be solved by improving the present IT solutions and policies. According to these responses, it is thus not only a question of receiving training etc. but also about how available IT tools are not functioning properly.

At the same time, the fourth most selected answer is to ask the young people for advice, which is both in terms of their technical skills but also to use IT and digital media for communication or in various kinds of activities. This answer allows for mutual sharing of knowledge between the adult professional and the young people.

Training in the use of IT and digital and social media

Nearly two-thirds (78) of the respondents indicate that they are aware of training in the use of IT and digital and social media. This indicates that the majority of the respondents meet demands for the use of IT and digital and social media at the workplace, and that the area is on the agenda in relation to working with children and young people. However, when we ask how many have actually received training in the use of IT and digital and social media, only about one third (46) of the respondents say that they have received training in the use of IT and digital and social media.

Of the 46 indicating that they have received training within the area, about 74% of the respondents say that they have attended a training course while about 46% say that they have received a presentation on the topic. Only 4 (9%) say that they have received internal training within the area and even fewer (3), representing 7%, have completed an edu-
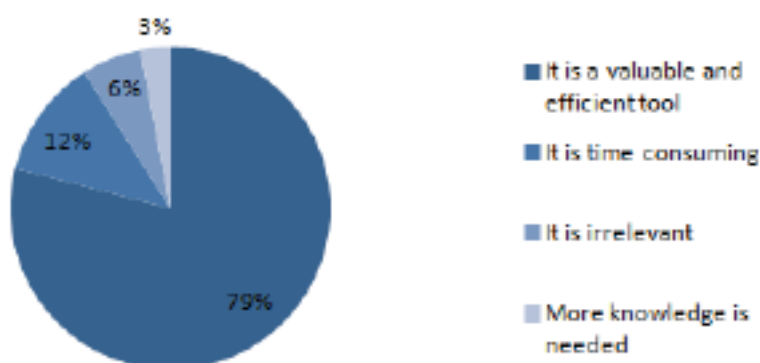
cation within the field. 22% (10) indicate that they have received online training within the area. All 46 respondents had the opportunity to choose more answers from the list, and the percentages therefore add up to more than 100%. The high percentage of those who have participated in courses and presentations suggests that the most common training consists of information provided to many people at the same time which might mean a low level of detailed information for each employee.

In particular, sparring with colleagues (82%) is mentioned when we ask whether the respondents have searched for other measures as inspiration for using IT and digital media in their work. Furthermore, the respondents also retrieve information from the Internet and books (58%). Only 7% say that they do not deem it relevant or necessary, while 12% believe that they have acquired enough knowledge through training. Again, all 125 respondents had the opportunity to choose from several possible answers, and it therefore adds up to more than 100%. The figures show that people are particularly inspired internally at the workplace which could suggest that the prevailing opinion among colleagues characterises the use of IT and media in the work.

The attitude towards IT and digital and social media

As many as 79% of respondents indicate that they consider IT and media as valuable and efficient tools in their work. In particular, it is emphasised that IT and media create new opportunities for communication, counselling and contact with the young people. It creates new ways of expression, both for the professionals and the young people. The survey indicates that IT and digital and social media are deemed to be effective and practical, as it is an easy way to get in touch with the young people and give them information as well as plan activities. 12% of respondents indicate that IT and media are time-consuming compared to other tasks, but that they can also contribute with positive aspects. However, the negative aspects take up more space than the positive ones. Some of the responses describe how more knowledge in the field is necessary. More knowledge would entail that the use of IT and digital and social media would not necessarily be a time-consuming process but a constructive and useful tool. By extension, it is also only 6% who reply that they do not consider IT and media relevant or believe that children and young people cannot get anything from the use of IT and media.

General attitude toward IT and digitale media

3%
6%
12%
79%

- It is a valuable and efficient tool
- It is time consuming
- It is irrelevant
- More knowledge is needed

Fokus groups

The purpose of the focus groups is to gather knowledge about IT and digital and social media use in educational and social work which, through this type of qualitative survey, is an opportunity to deepen perspectives, attitudes and concerns.
Two different target groups are employed in order to provide a broad picture; professionals and young people. In total, we conducted five focus group interviews.

The professionals are employees within educational and social work with a great age diversification. They work as youth counsellors, child welfare workers, social workers, educators and teachers.

The young people are students from a special boarding school that has a special focus on vulnerable young people. These young people are the same age as the young people, the professionals in the questionnaires and focus groups are working with.

Focus groups with professionals

We conducted three focus group interviews with 5-6 participants in each. All the participants are civil servants within educational and social youth work which was more a coincidence rather than a conscious choice. The focus groups therefore only provide insight into the use of IT and digital and social media in the public sector. As previously described, Denmark has a large public sector and we therefore believe the focus groups to be representative in relation to a general attitude in the use of IT and media in social and educational work in Denmark.

How to apply IT and digital and social media in educational and social work

Most respondents agreed that IT and media can serve as valuable supporting tools in educational work: *"We need IT – We must learn how to use it, create something with it."* If IT is to be used meaningfully in educational work, it seems necessary to create an implementation strategy, as these are complex tools that require a prolonged learning process in order to use them. Generally, the attitude of the focus groups towards IT and digital and social media is that they contribute with a lot of value – particularly, easy and effective communication is emphasised. *"Things are going faster"*, says one of the social workers. In addition, documentation and filing also become easier in the work with children and young people.

IT and media are also believed to benefit education; they can make it easier for students with various difficulties to receive education. IT also has a great potential for differentiated teaching and should serve as an opportunity to create a communicative awareness among students. Others believe, however, that something gets lost in the use of IT and media. One concern is that you eventually cannot do without it. Other respondents also express a more negative attitude towards IT and media. One psychotherapist does not believe that IT and media are compatible with the values with which he works, and the way he thinks people should be together. He also believes that children and young people are so preoccupied with their phones and computers that it becomes their whole lifeworld, and that they thus lose touch with themselves. He thus considers IT as being incompatible with his work whereas other respondents see it as a way to vary their work. When, in your work, you want to take point of departure in the lifeworld of children and young people and the way they interact, it can be difficult if you do not understand or have knowledge of how children and young people today communicate. A social worker comments hereto that: *"It would be pseudo to work with young people without also dealing with it [social and digital media] because it is such a large part of young people's lives."* This shows that some professionals consider media to be an approach to young people's lifeworld – a way to make contact while others consider the distance between the young person and the professional as being too large to function in social and educational work. There are thus both advantages and disadvantages of the use of IT and digital and social media in working with children and young people. An educator talks about the necessity of IT and media in working with children and young people. She says: *"I could not do my job without IT."* Other respondents also mention the necessity of IT. A teacher says: *"You are obliged to keep up with your subjects and culture."* In her work as teacher, one of the respondents experiences that the children quickly sense that she has an understanding of their use of IT and it provides an opportunity for a better conversation between her and the children because they share a common ground. Therefore, IT and media are both necessary and important tools in working with children and young people. This also reflects the fact that IT and media have become a highly integrated part of social and educational work. One of the challenges particularly emphasised in the focus groups is the fact that the use of IT in the workplace can be vulnerable. A social worker says: *"If it crashes, you cannot continue your work. Since it requires such a vast knowledge, it can cause major delays because you have to call support if it does not work."* Since IT and media are an integral part of working with children and young people in Denmark, there is necessarily also a number of regulations in the area. An educator says: *"Good and clear leadership is paramount. We always have a point called IT and media in our staff meetings."*

Incorporating IT and media in your work requires constant moderation and it involves a number of steps so neither professional staff or children and young people get trapped. In the survey, several of the respondents indicated that the reason why they did not use social media was because they *"felt it was too risky"* and *"to avoid ethical legal problems."*

Social media in educational and social work

For most respondents, there is a general tendency to use SMS services, contact by telephone and mail as preferred forms of communication. Additionally, they are using various other social media in their work. The benefit of using social media in the work is that it saves time, makes the process easier and more vivid for everyone involved. Some of the respondents, however, express no clear positive attitude to the use of social media. They say that it is not always appropriate to use social media in their work if children and young people are seeking help and do not wish to be recognised. The purpose of anonymous counselling is that children and young people can seek answers and advice while remaining anonymous, while some social media can complicate anonymity as they require a login or indication of who the person is.

In one of the participating municipalities, when hired, you have to sign a statement that you have read a number of rules on the use of IT and media in your work, but the respondents say that few people know the rules 100%, since the document is too confusing and comprehensive. In a way, it will therefore be up to the individual how and whether they employ the use of social media in their work. The municipality thus defines a set of guidelines in relation to how employees should use IT, media and specific programs in their work with children and young people, but from the employees' point of view, there is not enough being done for them to learn how to use IT and media in their work.

Snapchat: One of the respondents, a social worker, uses Snapchat in his work. He has created a "work profile" which he only uses when he is at work. He does not send Snapchats to the young people and only provides his user name if the young people ask for it. He experienced that he often received Snapchats from a girl at four in the morning. It puzzled him that she stayed up so late and it therefore became a subject in their counselling sessions. Snapchat thus provides an opportunity for the professional to obtain knowledge that, normally, he probably would not have obtained. The social worker adds that he made some important considerations when he decided to create a profile: *"It is important not to mix your private life and work."* Another social worker says that using social media in her work is not convenient. In social counselling alone, it is clear that there is a difference between how relevant it is to include social media since many different kinds of relationships with young

people are being built.

Apps: Several participants like to use apps as a way to give the young people tools to handle their everyday life. It can be meditation apps, pictogram apps, apps for meal planning etc. One of the respondents says, however, that she rarely uses apps even though she has the opportunity to do so, since the young people for different reasons do not want to use it. This is one example of the fact that it is not always appropriate to use IT and social media in working with children and young people. One respondent expresses that he would like to become more familiar with using the media and apps, so he can refer the young people to different apps which for example can make their daily lives easier.

Facebook: One of the respondents working in an open counselling service for young people for a municipal undertaking has expressed a desire to create a Facebook page, along with his department, but the desire has been rejected by the municipality. They were not informed about the reason. Generally, there are different opinions about the usefulness of Facebook as a social media for work with children and young people. Some believe that the disadvantage of Facebook is that it prevents the young person of being anonymity because other young people will be able to see that the young person is member of the group on Facebook. However, others are happy to use Facebook as they believe it is an effective way to distribute information to young people about certain activities bearing in mind that there must be clear rules for that page which is used as a one-way communication channel in order to protect the young people's privacy. An educator says: *"We cannot be without Facebook."*

How to combine IT and digital and social media with educational and social work

As mentioned above, some employees experience that they are not allowed to use IT to the extent they want, but they all say that their managers are open in relation to the involvement of IT and digital and social media in their work. However, they feel that this depends on their own initiative and drive, and in case they want to involve IT and media, the employees themselves *"will have to find it."* Introductory courses etc., which can prepare the staff to integrate IT and media in their work, are thus not being organised. The respondents further express frustration on this background. A generation gap has appeared in the way that older colleagues, who are used to other methods or approached, seem to have given up. An educator says: *"Many are being uncompromising,"* and a teacher further says: *"People are different, so not everyone gets quickly involved. It is difficult to force people to do something."* Other respondents feel, however, that too much time is being spent on IT compared to their actual core responsibilities. Overall, the trend is that there is a greater need for introduction and training in

the implementation of IT and media in the work where employees can gain practical experience and tools to use the media. An example of this need is described by one of the respondents, an educator. She used to work in an after school care facility where iPads were bought: "You cannot just buy iPads and expect that everyone knows how to work with them – and then we had one presentation." She says that she lacked a more thorough introduction to using iPads in educational practices. Such a statement emphasises the necessity of monitoring and assessment in order to facilitate the introduction of IT and media in the workplace. Generally, there is consensus among respondents that the use of IT and digital and social media requires training of both professionals and young people. The young people lack information about online ethics and conduct on digital and social media platforms. It is added that it should be compulsory in primary schools to introduce students to IT and media, including digital behaviour. In order to resolve the difficulties that might arise with the introduction of IT and media in education, a recent graduate teacher suggests that you let yourself inspire by local projects where IT and media have been involved; some schools create FabLabs , others rely on "De 32" (The 32): *"Throw some money at them because they are the ones who change things – not consultants or the ministry [...] Get a hold of the activists."* It is also regularly noted that there is a need to do something politically in order to create clarity about the rules, so that teachers and other educational personnel know what they can and cannot do. Others point out that it must be the responsibility of trade unions to provide information on the use of IT and media.

Self-reflection among children and young people on their digital activities

According to the respondents, there is also a cultural aspect of IT. She compares the necessity of having good manners and morals between people to having it on the Internet as well: *"It is so easy to accidentally step on someone's toes. If you step on someone's toes, you have to be able to reflect on why you did it."* In this connection, the participants, who are qualified teachers, stress the importance that their students obtain a self-consciousness about their online activities.

The participants are discussing who has the actual responsibility to teach the young people about online ethics. There is widespread agreement that it is difficult to place the responsibility in one single place. In particular, parents, teachers and the society in general are highlighted as the actors who must assume the responsibility. In one focus group, consensus was that parents should not necessarily be involved. In this focus group, most participants work with young people with problems. There is thus a clear difference concerning the target groups that respondents are working with. In another focus group, most participants mostly works with students in primary and lower secondary school

who have a solid foundation from home and, unlike the aforementioned focus group, it is deemed realistic to involve parents in their children's digital life. In this connection, a social education worker comments that: *"You have an important role teaching IT – especially, vulnerable young people who might not receive this kind of training at home. There is a huge lack in this area."* One of the respondents explain that they see a tendency at his workplace how the young people are not aware that they leave digital footprints when using IT and media. One of the teachers describes how some schools have introduced a course called web-ethics. *"We are talking with the children about it. It is very important. When we are reaching the older students, they have a life at school and a completely different reality at home – in terms of the media."* A social worker comments hereto that: *"You should not just talk about it when it goes wrong."* She believes that you should begin talking about online ethics as well as relations and behaviour online as early as possible in order to create an understanding within the child/the young person.

How to select and reject IT and digital and social media

It is necessary to reflect about when it is appropriate to use IT. In this connection, a teacher from one of the focus groups says: *"Everyone working with children and young people should be critical of it [IT] – you need to ask yourself what you want to use it for."* The participants believe that it will come gradually, as you become more able to understand the technology and able to deselect. Someone says: *"The world is getting more and more technological – we will have to deal with the technology and use it and not be enslaved by it; therefore, you need to make an effort to be able to deselect."*
The majority of respondents agree that a lot of hands-on courses need to be organised before professionals working with young people ate properly equipped to use IT and media in their work.

Focus groups with young students at boarding school

During the survey of the IT landscape in Denmark, we have conducted two focus group interviews with young people aged 15-16 years. The two groups consisted of eight and nine young people who at the time attended a Danish special boarding school. In Denmark, a boarding school is a private school where students can go for one or more school year(s) and completes the 8th, 9th or 10th grade. Here, the students follow academic subjects which are also part of the traditional Danish folkeskole, and the school often has an extra alternative focus, e.g. sports, music, dyslexia etc.
This boarding school has a proportion of young people who carry personal problems or other psychological or family problems with them. The school focuses on

inclusion and attribute great importance to the social perspective and the democratic way of thinking.

The purpose of the focus groups is to see how the young people experience IT and media and which role they play in their lives; both in terms of school work, free time and social relationships.

The interview covers *the use of IT in class and free time, online ethics* as well as some of the *concrete measures* mentioned by the boarding school on its website which concern the involvement of IT and digital media in the school environment.

IT and digital media in connection to teaching

The school uses Google Drive in teaching for submitting assignments and as a platform for group work and for teachers to upload teaching material etc. In addition, they make use of an internal communication system where the curriculum is made available and where event registration and communication with other students or teachers is possible. The young people do not use the communication system much in their daily lives, and the ongoing communication going mainly deals with practical things or messages which they do not want to express in an open forum.

In class, the young people have used YouTube to create homemade videos. They said that they primarily did so in the beginning of the school year. According to the young people, the reason why they no longer make use of video production could be due to upcoming exams or because with time, there was no longer a focus on producing videos.

One respondent says that he often gets confused by all these media and platforms which results in him *"getting enough of it"* while another one thinks that they use *"several different media for more or less the same thing which can become irritating."* This indicates that IT and media are not motivating factors as such – to them, the media are a natural part of their everyday lives and thus not a particular motivation factor.

Digital introduction week and focus on everything digital

In the beginning at the boarding school, the students participate in a digital introduction week. Here, they are introduced to different programmes which they have to employ during the week in order to produce a film. When asked how it took place, they responded that they *"were sitting in the hall and had to do what the teacher did. [We] were shown how to use it... more or less, and then we learned it along the way... I think."* Others say that *"it was a bit difficult. I have not completely learned it yet."* Despite the introduction to the programmes during the introduction week, the students do not feel entire familiar with

the programmes. They also say that they have not used them that much since. IT has thus not been a fixed part of classes throughout the school year. The use of technology here depends on the context and content and is not always necessarily the right solution. In this case, the use of IT and media was not prioritised.

As part of a focus on media and technology, the school has introduced something they call "Det Digitale Ord" (The Digital Word) where the students produce a video within a self-chosen theme which they present to the other students. The students like the idea of "Det Digitale Ord" and one of them says that "it is a smart way of telling about yourself and getting to know each other." Those who are not so good at speaking in front of many people here have a production form providing them support and comfort. However, "Det Digitale Ord" was not part of the current school year and the previous year not everyone had time to finish their videos. "Det Digitale Ord" is thus not a priority.

Social media
The students use social media in their free time and in class where especially Facebook is dominant. When asked why they are on Facebook, they expressively respond *"but we have to."* Facebook has become part of everyday life for the young people. For instance, they have a Facebook group with their teachers which they use to share practical information and messages which need to be spread fast. It is evident that the teachers use the medium in this connection because they are aware that this is where the young people can be found, and it is more effective than the platform SkoleIntra. One of the participants says that *"it [the Facebook group] is being used if they [the teachers] have to reach us fast – they know that we all check it the most."*

The boarding school has a policy that teachers and students are not friends on social media before the end of the school year. The students believe that this rule is created to ensure distance to one's private life. Communication between teachers and students about personal relations and thoughts take place face to face.

Several of the students have experienced unpleasant incidents on Facebook, and several of them have also tried to report it. They also had a "gossip page" with internal gossip but there is uncertainty about whether the page still exists.
On Facebook, the students have a 'students only' group with a more relaxed atmosphere. One of the students says that it is *"more fun"*. Here, they share other things than when the adults are around. The students talk about an incident where another student photo shopped a picture of a teacher. The picture was shared in the students' internal group but a teacher happened to discover it. The students thus act differently than when they know the adults are watching.

One fourth of the young respondents are using the medium Tumblr which is an inspirational platform with e.g. pictures and texts. Here, it is possible to be anonymous and it is not so much about you as an individual but more about what you like and what inspires you.
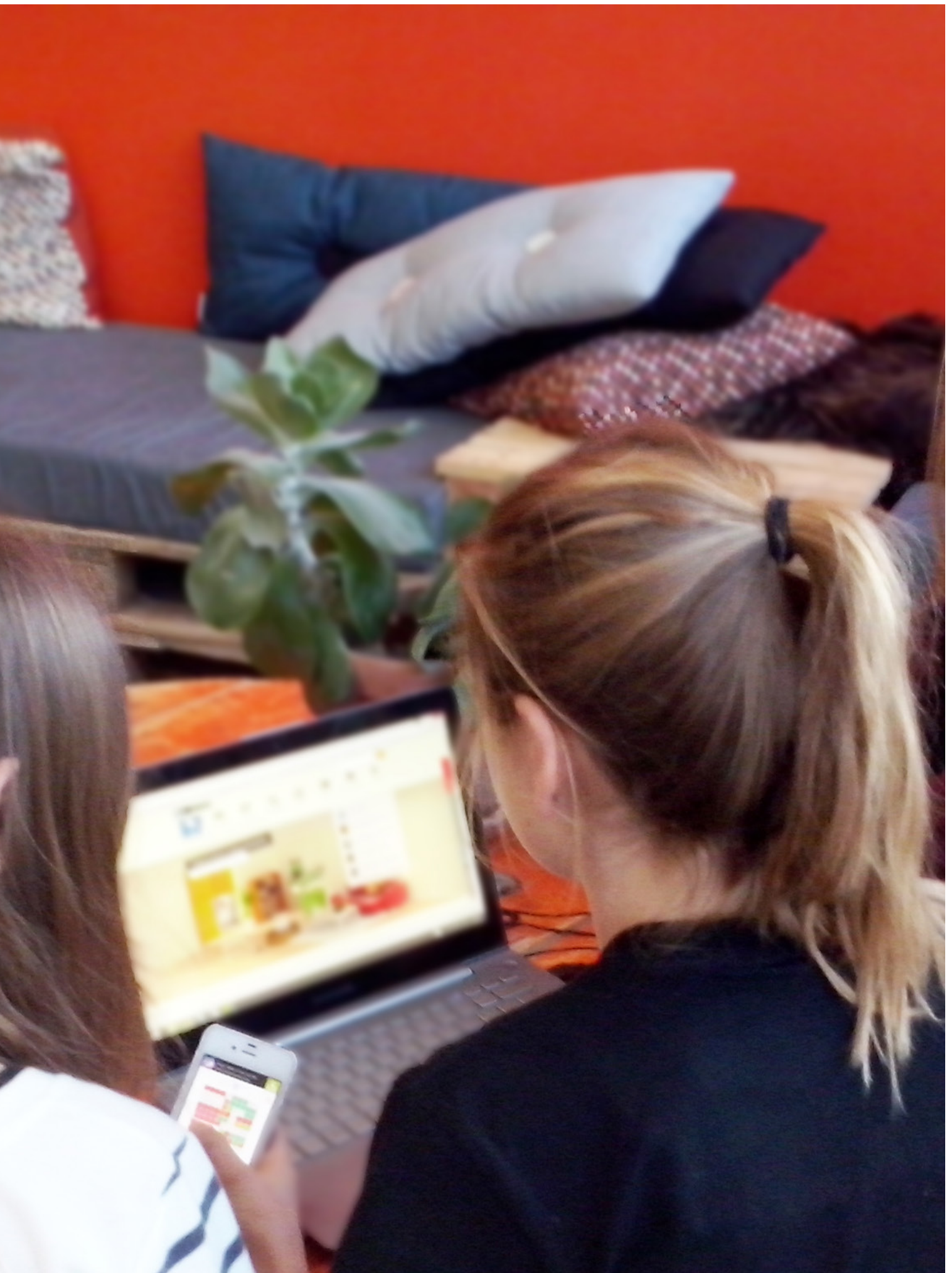
Online ethics and Internet behaviour
In connection to the discussion on Facebook, we asked the students about their views of 'online ethics' and 'Internet behaviour'. The students do not recall having touched upon these issues in class except for a course in English where they were dealing with cyberbullying. Regarding this course, they say that *"it was not specifically about how we talk [...] it was just education in social media. As a course in English."* The students thus do not feel affected by the issue.

They have an individual perception of how you should behave online. Their perception of how the students themselves are aware of how to communicate is also individual. Someone says, *"I think everybody knows"* while another says *"no, I don't think everybody knows!"* This stresses the importance of talking about the subject in order for them to gain a common knowledge of how to deal with bad behaviour online.

At the end of the year, the students had an incident concerning their blue book which they wrote on Google Drive. In a document, they could write about each other which some of them made an opportunity to write negatively about others. The teachers could see who wrote what and when. Some young people are thus not deterred or do not consider the fact that others can see who is behind. Naturally, the situation was followed up. When asked about how to avoid these kinds of incidents, one of them says that she *"does not really believe that there is something to be done – it depends on how people treat each other. I don't think you can target everybody and I think you have to know the people in order to do it."* It gives the impression that young people feel powerless and lack the necessary tools in such a situation. The students tell about how they once had someone visiting the school informing about behaviour on the Internet. They have the impression that this has not yet been followed up.

The students also have different approaches to the media. This is reflected in their comments to an incident at the school which resulted in a four hour shutdown of the Internet every day. This caused uproar, as access to social media is important in their communication with others. Others liked to be offline; as one of them said, they were *"liberated as human beings."* They moved their attention from their mobile phones towards face-to-face relations.

Case studies

In the following sections, we will investigate different kinds of involvement of IT and media in educational work.

Case study: Coding Pirates

This case study describes how volunteer IT activists educate children in being creative with IT and technology. Coding Pirates is a Danish volunteer association founded in spring 2014. When children play and draw, they use their imagination, and Coding Pirates wants to enable them to do the same through the use of technology. With Coding Pirates, the children thus have the opportunity and free space to express their creativity in interaction with various technologies.

Target group
Coding Pirates is a free time activity for 7 to 17 year-olds, in line with other youth services such as scouting and handball, for those who are interested in being creative with IT and explore the possibilities here.

Activities
Coding Pirates comprises one weekly activity which can run on a quarterly or half-yearly basis. The children are distributed in various workshops according to their interests, age or theme, and they work with different themes or technologies such as 3D printing and game programming. The structure of the workshops depends on the volunteers. They can either be open and only have an overall framework or specific in relation to a theme and production, but there is always room for the children to work and produce out of their own imagination.

Structure
Each department is independent and the department manager coordinates the department's progress. Each department is self-propelled and has an annual amount which they can spend on materials, refreshments for the children, etc.
Coding Pirates wish to create equivalence between the volunteers and the concept itself in order for the volunteers to feel that they are on an equal footing can help to shape it.

of technology.

Case study: IT and digital media among 0-6 year-olds

In the pre-school setting, the use of digital media is often limited to cameras and projectors, but there are ongoing changes happening to the user situation within this area. This case study is based on visits and interviews and will highlight some of the activities, practical and educational considerations, which two institutions – a nursery and a kindergarten – have made during their implementation of digital media in the institutions' daily activities.

In a **kindergarten**, they use smartphones, tablets and monitors as part of their tools. It takes away time from practical chores, as educators are not responsible for checkmarking, phone calls, and remembering things like medication, toilet visits, etc. which interfere with the time spent with the children. This information is moved from the head into the technology and is a way to increase efficiency and meet cuts, without it being at the expense of the children. One of the educators further says that *"the world of day care is constantly changing and in order to keep up with it, the institutions have to rethink educational practices."* The fewer distractions allows for more presence, but they also mention the "hidden time" required by the use of digital media, such as charge and installation time and updating programs.

Additionally, they have an interactive floor on which contents from a computer is projected, and there are apps attached which enable the children to create their own games, video or the like. This provides the children an opportunity to create something themselves. By creating content, it is possible to actualise things they deal with while they develop ideas, collaborate and get their creative sense supported. For an adult, it is essential to let the children decide and have ownership, since there is a great development potential in the process as co-creator.

It is also possible to deal with school-related topics, but educators emphasise that it is important for them that it remains fun. Tablets, IT and digital media are often used in a context where the children need to sit still, but they can also be used in connection with movement. Furthermore, the educators also use tablets with translation apps in communicating with parents who have difficulties in understanding Danish.

In connection with the introduction of tablets, a **nursery** has focused on not to force the educators to use them, but they have been made available, and this has slowly created an interest. The employees have thus become comfortable with the medium – and as the manager emphasises; *"it must make sense for the educators."*

The volunteers also participate in the planning of the workshops, and it is possible to set up a workshop on the basis of given subject or with a particular angle, if they have a particular interest.
In Coding Pirates, all that is required of the volunteers is that they have a technological and/or educational interest and curiosity. It is not necessary to be a super user within IT.

The development of Coding Pirates
In just one year, the Coding Pirates project has experienced a great development; it has gone from consisting of one department in 2015 to having 20 departments across Denmark, with 450 enrolled children, and more are constantly joining. Coding Pirates have also become imperative within academia. For example, they participate with workshops on various knowledge festivals and conferences, including FabLab@SCHOOL, CounterPlay and Internet Week Denmark.

The children's digital development
By giving children an insight into programming and technology, Coding Pirates wish to give children the opportunity to relate critically to our society. The focus is to spark a technological curiosity within the children so they learn to think with technology, and not just consume it. They are provided the opportunity to learn that technology is not something that just "is"; it is always possible to change it and do something with it. The children's digital horizon is extended and hopefully they can develop into becoming critical and reflective consumers

They have used tablets to produce homemade puzzles or books where the children helped to find pictures and songs as well as record sounds to games of memory. In this way, the medium became a tool for dialogue that could change content, and for instance, the children practiced recognising motives and pronouncing names of animals. Like other toys, the medium can act as a common third and support play relations and also has the advantage that the activity and content can vary, meaning that it is not fixed in terms of level of difficulty.

Furthermore, the institution also used a tablet to record a child they had concerns about in order for them to observe the child at a later stage without being disturbed and thus determine how to proceed.

Challenges

Working with digital media requires upgrading the skills of employees in order for them to feel safe and preventing them from resisting. The educators also points out that there can be a barrier from the parents' side, since many would argue that digital media belong to the home, and that children must "play" when they are in the institution. The institutions thus have to bear in mind that not all parents are supporting the use of digital media, and the institution needs reflect on how different barriers are broken or removed.

Case study: Cyberhus.dk

Cyberhus.dk is an online counselling site for Danish children and young people in the age of 9 to 23. The website focuses on providing offers to vulnerable and disadvantaged young people but also to be a site for young people with "classic" problems related to being young. Both boys and girls make use of the offers, and the visitors are spread geographically throughout Denmark. It is particularly 15 to 18-year-olds who visit the site. Working anonymously in the dialogue with the child/young person is central to cyberhus.dk's approach.

"Mathias"

One of the young people having made use of cyberhus.dk is 17-year-old Mathias . Mathias makes use of the problem pages, blogs, life stories and debate on cyberhus.dk in order to talk with other young people and obtaining advice from adults.

"At Cyberhus, there is always someone to talk to. I can find help not available anywhere else. You can put your own problems in perspective to others' and thus gain an understanding that it is not just you who are having problems." (Boy, 17 years old)

This is the reason why Mathias is using cyberhus.dk. He uses cyberhus.dk when he is looking for some good advice, a good talk or a new perspective on things, and

he believes that he can find all these things on cyberhus. dk. At the same time, Mathias does not feel unsafe using cyberhus.dk:

"I am not afraid that I will suddenly lose my anonymity. I am ready to stand by everything I write in reality. So I am just not worried." (Boy, 17 years old)

This indicates that Mathias perceives cyberhus.dk as a place to safely write, express yourself and receive the help and advice that you need.
Mathias believes that writing on cyberhus.dk has a good effect, and he says that he experiences a change within himself as a result of using cyberhus.dk:

"If I write about a problem or just some thoughts that I have, then I release some frustrations. Of course I could just post something on Facebook but I hate it myself when people write private things in there, so I keep with a site like Cyberhus. The feeling of writing something that you know others can read is still somehow a good remedy for frustrations or sadness." (Boy, 17 years old)

A quote highlighting that cyberhus.dk functions as a social medium for young people and that cyberhus.dk possesses some other qualities compared to other social media, such as Facebook. At cyberhus.dk, it is possible to write other things because the focus is different.
Mathias also says that cyberhus.dk is a place to seek if you do not know where else to find help:

"Sometimes you just need to hear the objective opinion of someone. Your parents, siblings, friends or teachers will always relate partially subjective to your problems because they know who you are." (Boy, 17 years old)

Cyberhus.dk is a place where you can talk with people who hold no "stocks" in your life. This also means that you can be completely anonymous at Cyberhus and you do not need to worry about the meaning of what you tell.
Cyberhus is also a place Mathias uses in order to unload and feel heard. He mentions the feeling of not being alone and that it is possible to release your thoughts without having to worry as two of his valued qualities of cyberhus.dk. However, he also mentions that he is tired of the fact that it sometimes seems as if some young people write frivolous things, and that it is difficult to judge whether it is true or for fun. On sites like cyberhus. dk, it can be difficult to avoid frivolous posts, but Mathias' statement indicates that it could affect the children and young people actually using Cyberhus as a serious medium.
Despite the fact that there are things Mathias is unhappy with at Cyberhus, he may well consider using cyberhus. dk again:

"You can always bump into situations where a site like

Cyberhus could be helpful. Wish that the site was more widespread. The more people using the page, the better. I am sure there are thousands of people who would like to make use of the site, but probably do not know it exists." (Boy, 17 years old)

This could indicate that children and young people not only use sites like Cyberhus to receive advice and guidance from adult advisors but also to talk with other young people about a common theme that they might not feel able to talk with other children and young people about in "reality".

"Julie"
14-year-old Julie is another example of a young person using cyberhus.dk. She makes more use of Cyberhus' offers, including the problem page, 1-1 chat, group chat, blogs and image gallery. She uses Cyberhus for advice, inspiration and to talk with other young people. Furthermore, she sometimes drops by Cyberhus just for fun. Julie chooses Cyberhus because:

"It is a good and straightforward site. At Cyberhus, there is always someone to talk to. I can find help not available anywhere else. I can be anonymous. I can be myself there (at Cyberhus)." (Girl, 14 years old)

In particular, Julie thinks that the group chat, where you can talk with other young people about what's on your mind, and the image gallery, where you can express yourself visually, make Cyberhus a good site. However, she does not think that the pages 'hemmelighederne' (the secrets) and 'unge-blogs' (youth blogs) work very well.
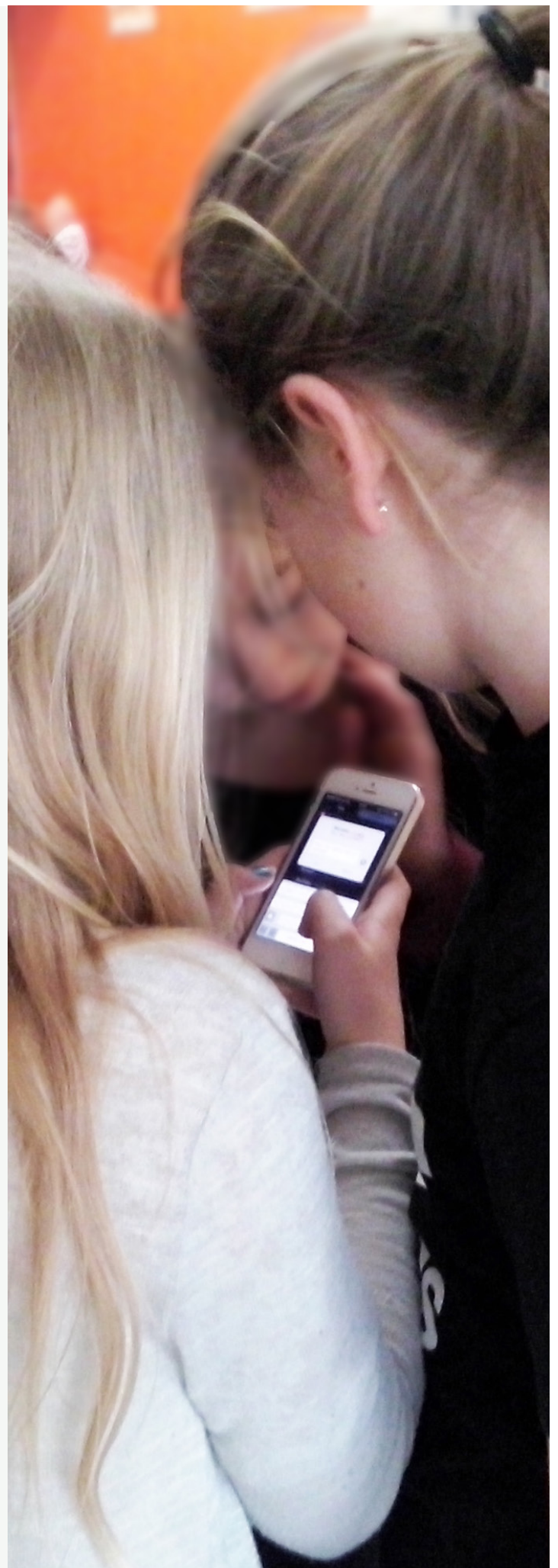When Julie visits Cyberhus, it is often to get a good piece of advice or a good talk. She sometimes does not feel safe using cyberhus.dk:

"Sometimes I imagine that it is someone I know in my private life – that I am talking with in the chat room. The experiences I have had could easily be recognised by people I have relations to." (Girl, 14 years old)

This quote illustrates how digital counselling can create anxiety among users because there may be a small hint of uncertainty. In particular, the anonymity seems to worry Julie – she is afraid that others might recognise her.
After having used Cyberhus, Julie feels a change; she feels more happy and relieved. We asked her whether she would consider using Cyberhus again to which she replied 'yes'. The last quote from Julie shows one of the reasons why she keeps returning to Cyberhus:

"Because I have made fantastic friendships here." (Girl, 14 years old).