

Exploring Play and Creativity in Pre-Schoolers' Use of Apps

CASE STUDIES - VISIT SCHEDULE

Visit 1 - Familiarisation visit

Give the child some paper and felt pens to draw with whilst you talk to the parent. Depending on age, you could ask them to draw something that might be relevant for the project e.g. a character from an app – or a favourite TV character.

Go through the parent information sheet and explain any part of the project the parent is not sure about.

Go through survey questions with the parent and talk about the data they entered, if they can remember. If they can't, ask them what they would input if they were completing this today. Please record this interview on the Dictaphone.

Ask the child to show some of his/ her favourite tablet apps and talk about them. If the child is too young to do this, then ask the parent to show the apps and talk about why their child likes them. Please video record the child and/ or parent using/ talking about the apps.

Ask parent to use smartphone (if they have one) to take any interesting data on child's use of tablet apps until the next visit. Explain how to do this – ask them to take video and/ or photographs and then on the next visit, the researcher will upload this to a laptop. Talk about the kinds of interesting data they could collect e.g. child using tablet app, child playing games/ toys related to tablet app, child undertaking creative activity related to tablet app, child playing on apps with siblings/ family members etc.

Ask what type of voucher they would like on conclusion of the project (e.g. Apple; Argos; John Lewis; Tesco).

Visit 2 – Observation of app use

If the parent recorded data, look through it with him/ her and ask why that data has been recorded, what it means to the parent/ child and so on.

Look at the apps on the tablet with parents and children– get a sense of which ones are used by the child, which ones were specifically downloaded for their use, and the frequency each one is used. As about the history of apps i.e. when children first started using them, how soon they moved on, what they moved on to.

Depending on the age of the child, ask child to use their favourite apps and film them doing so. Ask child about the app e.g. why he/ she likes it e.g. "Tell me about this app..." "What would you say to a friend about this app?" Discuss the daily schedule of family life and how the use of tablets relates to this schedule. If the child uses music apps, explore what types and how these fit into the daily schedule.

Ask parent if he/ she uses apps with their child and if so, ask them to use a typical app together. Film the parent/ child doing this. Talk to the parent about the app afterwards – why they use it, who normally initiates its use etc.

Ask parent specifically about play and creativity in relation to their children's use of apps e.g.

- What does play mean to you?
- What kinds of play does your child engage in (also ask about when and where)?
- What sort of play does N's use of apps promote? Can you give me some examples?
- Does your child have toys or objects related to any of their apps? If so, how does he/ she use them?
- What types of apps promote play, in your view? Why is that?
- Do you help your child with apps or do you prefer your child to figure it out on their own?' and then 'How...'
- What does creativity mean to you?
- What kinds of creative activities does your child engage in (also ask about when and where)?
- What types of apps promote creativity, in your view? Why is that?
- How do you support your child's creativity with tablet apps?
- Do you have any other comments on this topic?

If the child uses YouTube, talk about this with the parent: how often does the child use it; what types of videos does he/ she like to watch; how does he she find out about those videos; has he/ she ever seen unwanted content; does the parent or child use the favourites options; does the parent know how to use the safety feature of YouTube.

If age appropriate, ask child to tell you about which apps are good for playing, which are good for making things, which are good for learning.

Ask parent to use smartphone (if they have one) to take any interesting data on child's use of tablet apps until the next visit.

Visit 3-4 – Observation of app use and ‘play and creativity’ tour

If the parent recorded data, look through it with him/ her and ask why that data has been recorded, what it means to the parent/ child and so on.

Undertake a ‘play and creativity’ tour of the house with parent and child (see guide at end of this schedule).

Explore relative costs of apps in relation to picture books, toys, etc. Possible questions include:

- Which apps have you paid for?
- Why did you pay for them?
- What makes you willing to pay for an app?
- What would prevent you from buying an app?
- What do you feel about buying apps in contrast with buying picture books for your child, or buying toys?
- When you have found a good app, do you seek out further apps by the same company? What are the feelings/ experiences towards in-app purchases?

Ask child to use their favourite apps (not used on previous visit) and film them doing so. Ask child about the app e.g. why he/ she likes it. Ask parent to support the child in the way they would normally as he/ she uses the apps.

(If age appropriate) - Give child felt pens and paper and ask them to draw an app that they would love to have or be invented. Talk to them about the drawing.

Visit 5 – Final visit

This visit can be used to tie up any loose ends e.g. explore issues that arose but that were not explored on previous visits.

Ask if parent would like to be involved in any dissemination events aimed at other parents, to take place in November (ESRC Social Sciences Festival).

Thank child and parents and leave the £100 voucher.

PLAY AND CREATIVITY TOUR

Purpose: To identify spaces in the house where children's play and creativity occurs and to examine the role of tablet apps within this.

Procedure:

Create a 2D plan of the house, in collaboration with the parent. Visit each room with the parent and child, including any spaces outside of the house, such as garage/ shed, where play/ creativity takes place.

Begin by asking the parent to identify what they mean by play and creativity – what kinds of activities do these categories include?

Then visit each room in which the parent and/ or child identify that play takes place. Record all the material objects related to play/ creativity in that space by taking digital photographs and recording what children and parents say.

Use the observation schedule to note down ownership of the items that promote play and creativity for each room. Include further identifying detail such as the name/brand of the toy/technology or a brief description. Where there is a large number of small toys i.e. cars or Lego bricks, actual numbers should not be recorded, rather a proxy symbol given to indicate a toy's presence.

Ask the children to take photographs, using a colour digital camera/ tablet, of their favourite things/ places. The children can have the option to tell the researcher or parent what pictures to take.

As we are particularly interested in the role of technology in play, ask children and parents about this in relation to each room e.g. does the child bring the tablet into this room? If so, how does he/s he use it? Ask also about the playful/ creative use of other technologies in the room – computers, laptops, console games and so on.

Stimuli for play/ creativity	Notes	Interaction with tablet apps
<i>Animals</i>		
<i>Arts & crafts</i>		
<i>Baby & Toddler toys</i>		
<i>Board Games</i>		
<i>Construction</i>		
<i>Dinosaurs & Accessories</i>		
<i>Dolls & Accessories</i>		
<i>Domestic (including kitchen) items</i>		
<i>Dress-up & Accessories</i>		
<i>Educational: word & number</i>		
<i>Jigsaws & Puzzles</i>		
<i>Music</i>		
<i>Outdoor & Large play</i>		
<i>Small World, figures & Accessories</i>		
<i>Soft Toys</i>		
<i>Sports</i>		
<i>Technological Toys</i>		
<i>Vehicles & Accessories</i>		
<i>Water & Sand play</i>		
<i>Wooden Toys</i>		
<i>Weapons</i>		
Technologies		
<i>Tablet</i>		
<i>iPod/ MP3 player</i>		
<i>Smartphone</i>		
<i>Computer</i>		
<i>Laptop</i>		
<i>Games console</i>		
<i>Handheld computer</i>		
<i>Television/ DVD player</i>		
<i>Radio</i>		
<i>CD Player</i>		