"There is this Guy on YouTube…"

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Every father and every mother who still indulges in conversations with their kids has heard this phrase before. Most likely listening mirthlessly, but secretly rolling their eyes, asking themselves endless questions starting with "Why...?". Why is it so important what this guy on YouTube uploaded? Why is it that my kids can´t ask me a question or state an opinion that is not supported in any way by a YouTube Video? Why do I have to listen to something my kid recites, whereas I am not interested in anything that some random guy on YouTube has said? Why do my kids always need a backup of some sort and cannot express their own thinking? Answers to some of these questions and indeed worries come from some of the most sophisticated minds in a series of articles published by Edge.org. In 2013 Edge asked its contributors "What *should* we be worried about? [1]. And whilst browsing through the responses it becomes apparent why we should worry about a culture of "Internet Drivel" [2], a culture to "glorify stupid" [3], and a culture where "… objects take children away from many things that we know from generations of experience are most nurturant for them" [4]. The question arises as to why we - as parents - appear to be the only ones that feel a responsibility toward a culture many of us don´t want, but our kids already inhale daily. What should we be worried about and what can we do to counteract a development that seems unstoppable? The paper explores the most prominent responses and thoughts to the above question and discusses them in relation to established primary education.

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1. "There is this guy on YouTube…"

In the end, a simple fragment of a sentence, but unfortunately it is quite concerning how many of the "worrying" matters brought forward by some of the world´s finest minds reverberate with it. It is more so remarkable how much trust and excitement there is to acknowledge when kids refer to it. One can sense their pride in a possession they are willing to share with someone they approach. One can feel their excitement of knowing what others don´t. This is not necessarily a bad thing, but it is important to note that the guy on YouTube almost became the only source of information our kids gather from, or when is the last time you heard your kids saying, "There is this book in the library…" or "There was this conversation with…". It is also almost exclusively referenced as something positive, something that doesn´t need to be questioned, something that is undoubtedly true. This is indeed hardly ever the case, and no matter if it is YouTube or TikTok, the content watched by pupils of primary school age is usually fast, simple, and doesn´t need an awful lot of thinking to follow. In fact, it is often not even a matter of suggested or known truth, it is simply entertaining content with no deeper meaning that is not worth referencing. In this sense, it is indeed worrying that 25% of the content of the 10 most popular YouTube channels targets an audience between 2 and 5 years of age and that almost half of the 1.2 billion subscribers to these 10 channels watch content that is essentially low-level entertainment [5]. In a nutshell, the fragment of the sentence typically continues with trivia, something that appears to be a howling attraction to the younger generation. Something that is worrisome.

2. The Devaluation of Writing and Time and the Loss of Intellect and Humility

Gelernter reflects the internet forces a general devaluation of the written word. Its capacity to distribute words near-instantly means that, with no lag-time between writing and publication, publication and worldwide availability, pressure builds on the writer to produce more [2]. It is beyond all question that media such as YouTube play along with this scenario very well. The user doesn´t even need to take the time to put anything in writing. Speech and publication appear instantaneously, and most content of the prominent low-level entertainment category devalues rapidly but stays available forever. He certainly has a point when referring to the "toxic mix which our schools force-feed our children every day", meaning that the encouragement to use technology without proper guidance results in pupils making their own choices. And these aren´t necessarily always the best. Paper - as the basis of the written word - is one of the most useful and valuable media ever invented [6], but we are already aware that the use of paper in schools is no longer promoted. iPads and mobile phones have taken

over and teachers ask kids to take photos of the blackboard to save time, neglecting the fact that, as Devlin states, "we are rapidly losing, if indeed we have not already lost, the habit - and love - of scribbling with paper and pencil" [7]. He then continues that "In a world dominated by cheap, sophisticated, presentation technologies, paper-and-pencil work may go the way of the DoDo. And if that happens, mathematics will no longer advance. As a living, growing subject, it will die." And even though prominent processes and methodologies such as Design Thinking or the Unconscious Thought Theory, can extensively be supported through pen and paper and are also used in many industries - and can therefore be taught across many school subjects - the understanding did not yet settle in institutions of primary education. In his article "The Patience Deficit" [8] Carr responds to the fact that "Our gadgets train us to expect near-instantaneous responses to our actions, and we quickly get frustrated and annoyed at even brief delays. … As a result, we'll be less likely to experience anything that requires us to wait, that doesn't provide us with instant gratification." Knowing that this might exclude many occurrences from one's private, social, and professional life, the question might be asked, why do schools constantly pressure pupils with not having enough time, usually referring to the curricular schedule being so tight, but not educate them about the value of time? In this regard Lombrozo [9] worries about "… the illusion of knowledge and understanding that can result from having information so readily and effortlessly available." And she concludes that "We have to give up on the idea that fast and easy access to information is always better access to information." Similarly, Arikha [10] presumes that we have to redirect attention to slow reading and old sources, whilst Schank [11] is "…worried that people can't think, can't reason from evidence, and don't even know what would constitute evidence. People don't know how to ask the right questions, much less answer them." These are indeed worrisome thoughts but based on the same proposition, the depreciation of the written word and time.

3. Losing Touch with Reality, and the Connection of Body and Mind

From a very young age, children want the same devices as their parents. Turkle worries that the shiny objects of the digital world encourage a sensibility of constant connection, constant distraction, and never-aloneness [12]. She resumes that in addition to taking children away from a conversation with other children, too much time with screens can take children away from themselves, not satisfying the need to hear their own voices. Continual interactivity and connection preclude the mind to wander and to have time for self-reflection. Solitude as a precondition for creativity and conversation is impossible due to the holding power of the screen. In his article "The Triumph of the Virtual, and its Consequences", Csikszentmihalyi [13] puts it even further when he worries that in one or two generations children will grow up to be adults who will not be able to tell reality from imagination." And Blackmore [14] indicates that the ability to use our hands disappears, since trade skills like bricklaying and plumbing, are now tested more by written exams than by what students can actually do, belittling the important manual skills that take so much practice to acquire. She then presumes that every time we build a machine to do something that we previously did ourselves, we separate our minds a little further from our hands. The fact that many schools do not even provide programs (or spaces) where pupils feel a need to use their hands certainly supports her arguments. It is these hardships that Alter [15] sees declining with the rise of lifestyle technologies. iPhones and iPads are miraculously intuitive he states, but their user-friendliness means that children as young as three or four years of age can learn to use them, but they never experience the minor hardships that attend other tasks - such as using your hands for cooking or your brain to perform mental arithmetic. Consequently, today's children might be poorly prepared for the more difficult tasks that meet them as time passes.

4. Why Teacher Education isn´t the Solution

Some of the world´s most brilliant minds worry about a culture that glorifies stupid, an educational system that banns the use of pen and paper and rolls out the red carpet for a technology that most of their proponents do not even know what to do with. They worry about children missing out on the capacity for self-reflection, due to constant interactivity and continual connection, and they worry that kids lose the capacity to think. They worry about nothing less than that in one or two generations those children that grew up to be adults will not be able to tell reality from imagination.

If this doesn´t worry you, we don´t know what does!

Considering the aforementioned it becomes obvious that a lot goes wrong in today´s primary school education. It goes without saying that the call for teacher education echoes in those institutions that

take the matter seriously. Unfortunately, it won´t help. As Voogt and McKenney summarize in [16], beginning teachers are not sufficiently prepared to use Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in the classroom, and teacher education institutes (TEI´s) were struggling with integrating Technological Pedagogical and Content Knowledge (TPACK) in the curriculum. "The findings suggest that TEI´s are not currently preparing pre-service teachers to use technology for early literacy. A major reason for this is that pre-service teacher educators themselves consider their own level of knowledge and skills to be weak, and have limited opportunities for developing their integrated TPACK."

Indeed, teacher education plays a vital role in counteracting a development that seems unstoppable. However, the problems are manifold. Educators of teachers are not well educated themselves. Schools are stuck with a pre-set curriculum. Teachers do not dare to think aloud and are evenly caught in a curricular system with few variables. Ministries are oftentimes self-complacent and fall in love with industries that spill out technology coevally influencing (supporting?) teachers, students, and staff. Parents are not even part of the equation. Those that know their kids better than anyone else are neither involved nor asked for their opinion. They will just have to pay the bill.

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