

Necio – Playing Online Together



Application for kids

Project summary

Media and new technologies are a growing presence in children's lives. Therefore it is crucial that parents be actively involved in ensuring the online safety of their children and in navigating their media education. **"Necio – Playing Online Together"** is a project for children, their parents and educators. It provides various tools for children and adults so that they discover the online world together. It includes a website with educational games, songs and other activities and workshop scenarios that are carried out in kindergartens. In response to the increasing use of mobile devices among children, the content has been adapted and further developed as an application. **The Necio application** for Android mobile devices (smartphones, tablets) includes games that introduce the players to the mobile environment, and teach them to navigate it effectively, as well as games and activities promoting online safety.

Aims

- Increasing understanding among parents of media activities and online challenges that children face
- Engaging and supporting parents in the active media education of their children
- Equipping parents with knowledge and information about online safety and the online world
- Providing parents and preschool personnel with tools and aids to talk about the online world and discover it together with children
- Raising awareness among parents and preschool personnel about online threats and online safety
- Providing an opportunity and suitable environment for children to learn about different aspects of being online
- Teaching children how to use computers and the Internet effectively
- Teaching children how to stay safe online
- Providing a platform where children and parents can discover the Internet together
- Empowering parents and caretakers to address the topic of media use

Target groups: The main target groups are children aged three to seven, their parents and caretakers. The project also addresses professionals (mainly preschool) working with young children.

Media: Website and application

Methods

The methods used in the project – website content, application, lesson scenarios – focus on learning through play and introduce new experiences through different tools. The intellectual and cognitive benefits of playing have been well documented; therefore all the resources in the Necio Playing Online Together project are highly engaging and interactive.

encouraging children to explore, experiment, learn from mistakes, and progress at their own speed. The content includes educational games, animations, songs, audiobooks, exercises, workshop scenarios, printable worksheets, etc. The resources have been developed with the participation of children.

Duration: The project started in January 2012. The final date of the project is not scheduled. The application was developed in 2014/2015.

Resources needed: Specialists involved in the project included pedagogues, psychologists, a sociologist and a speech therapist.

Project description

Children are exposed to advanced technology such as tablets, e-readers, smartphones, and computers at an early age, and their media use grows quickly. The first steps in the world of virtual media provide a great opportunity to teach young Internet users about the mechanics of the new media and basic principles of online safety. In 2012 the Nobody's Children Foundation (NCF) launched the interactive project "Necio – Playing Online Together" for preschoolers, their parents and educators. The aim of the project is to educate children aged three to seven about online safety and to increase parents' involvement in the online activities of their children. The main feature of the project is a website, www.necio.pl, where friendly robot Necio teaches children how to use computers and the rules of online communication, and also guides them through basic rules of online safety such as: not trusting strangers and online content, and talking with parents about anything that is disturbing. The content has been designed by early-childhood psychologists and experts in the field of new technologies. It is developmentally appropriate for the target group and responsive to the ages and developmental levels of children. It proposes many activities that are presented in a play-like fashion (learning through playing) and matched to the attention span of the target group. The content of the website is appealing and interesting; it can be navigated by pre/non-readers, and offers opportunities to make choices, thus encouraging children to use their imagination. It also promotes skills recommended by early-learning guidelines. The website allows and encourages parents to actively participate in all the activities. It provides an opportunity and tools to address different online issues. Parents are provided with information about the Internet use of preschoolers. At each step, the importance of parents in educating children to use online technology safely is highlighted. The content of the website was both adapted and further developed as an application for mobile devices. Part of the project is designed also for preschool teachers. An educational set was developed, based on which five thematic educational workshops for children can be conducted. Additionally, teachers can prepare with their pupils a show about online safety. Educational packages include: lesson scenarios, multimedia such as an audiobook and songs, printable materials such as posters and workbooks for children. All materials can be downloaded for free at www.dzieckowsieci.pl.

Method(s): The project is based on the methodology of 'fun pedagogy'. Games attractive to children transmit information about safe use of mobile devices. The website Necio.pl features educational computer games and animations, an educational story available in audiobook form, songs about online safety, and educational exercises. The project creators prepared five thematic educational workshops for preschool children. The application focuses on learning through play and encouraging children to explore, identify, negotiate, take risks and create meaning.

Exemplary description of one day/part of project

During the app development, most of the time was devoted to detailed work on the tool itself. The project team worked on the application conceptualization and content, consulting with specialists, focusing the app with children and making necessary adjustments.

What needs special attention?

In 2014 NCF conducted a study, "Identification of Parents' Needs on Mobile Applications for their Children". The research shows that parents value most the applications that combine education with entertainment. The biggest risk during work

on the application is having excessive educational content in it. It is important for the app to have the right proportions of information/education and games.

Project implementation difficulties

The difficulty that occurred during the project was difference in the stages of development of the target group. The application is meant to be used by children between three and seven years of age. It is difficult to create app content that is understandable and attractive for both the youngest children and those slightly older.

What could be improved?

An improvement that could be made would be a restriction in the age of the app recipients so that the educational message could be skillfully adjusted to the specific needs of the age group. It is also important to add games to the app repertoire that are interesting and appealing to children.

Information about the organization that runs the project

Initiator: Nobody's Children Foundation

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