

Read Review Respond – Alan Perkins
Chapter 2 of Tech Tonic: a New Literacy of Technology from Alliance for Childhood – TechTonic
– What’s Wrong With a High-Tech Childhood?

The author sets out to discuss whether we are teaching children to use technology in the correct way or are we leading them to a *‘technology ill-literacy’* that will end in their demise. Note the author uses very emotive language throughout and I found the use of *‘our children’* as a little too much. I am not a parent but I am a concerned professional teacher who wants to look at the argument from an objective position. However:-

Summary

- The author begins how the main force in making children use technology is business, and the need to train children for the workforce. So much so that parents, schools, governments have all followed and pushed this so bringing the stressful adult life into children’s education and lifestyle.
- The author continues how due to technology family life and time together has disintegrated – in which the ideal is separate technology spaces for each family member.
- The author highlights statistics about amount of technology use related to television mainly saying insinuating this ends with ill health if a child watches more than 1 hour of television a day (I’m doomed I think!)
- The author raises the interesting point of *‘passive dependency’* of technologies which children and adults alike can not say no to the technologies surrounding them – and so this takes away from time spent building *‘intellectual, emotional, social and physical developments’*
- The author lists a variety of examples where technology is impinging including:- ubiquitous pornography, advertisements, online hate sites, loss of play, video game violence. And beyond this the pressure to do activities to impress future employers involving technology leaving no TIME for social development or simply fun – hanging out
- *‘Childhood takes time’* and so cognitive development can not be rushed through and technology of all things has not been proved to improve education but is still chosen over more simple but maybe effective means like reducing class sizes...
- Governments have standardized testing and curriculums and so leaving less and less time, with basic skills suffering including handwriting...
- Internet use is also examined and the lack of limits on time used in the home, and filtering or checking of what children are doing are worrying issues. The gender issues related to internet use are discussed where girls often experience situations and behaviour online which is way beyond their ability to deal with...including sexual harassment in chat sites and online bullying...
- Media violence is re-examined and suggested it *‘points overwhelmingly to a causal connection between media violence and aggressive behaviour in some children.’* Interesting supposition that those children who watched television from 1 to 3 years old increased attention deficit symptoms????
- Physical issues were discussed in more detail, including *‘Nintendo thumb’*, backpack carrying of laptops and mobile phone electromagnetic radiation.
- The author discusses briefly why the lure of indoor virtual environments exists due to the outside world’s lack of areas safe for children to play.
- *‘Our media culture has given rise to a different kind of pollution that is internal’* – in which the author discusses many problems including that of the marketer targeting young audiences through *‘materialism, sexual insecurity, jealousy, vanity and greed’*
- The author suggests that *‘WE’* can fight back as *‘technology is not destiny’* citing examples of this – suggesting that technology should serve out human needs rather than we respond to the needs of the cult of technologies.

Personal Thoughts

How far do you agree with the views expressed in the report?

- As pointed out in my introduction, I dislike the emotive use of language within this paper it often reminded me of lectures that my parents used to give to me – and in fact still do especially when I am at home on holiday using the internet ...☺
- This is a pity as some of the points that are raised do need to be discussed further and addressed in much more detail. Specifically the idea of how we not only as children but as human beings enable technology to not monopolise our time in a way which is not beneficial to our well being. The idea of '*passive dependency*' is an interesting one, a recent discussion with a student I discussed this issue and the often stressful experiences technologies can bring to ones life when computers crash and a 3 hour re-install is needed – and both the father of the family and the student need the computer NOW. This also leads onto discussions about '*information fluency*', '*multitasking*', and beyond that to whether '*digital natives*' actually exist?
- Does this article deal with technologies at the moment and their failure rather than '*technologies as is*'? And so when technologies become more *ubiquitous* and better designed then a great deal of these issues will disappear? Maybe when we can connect via voice to a school network, ask it to download at speed to our portable device that we are wearing and listen to while on way to work – will this be less time consuming than sitting at a computer, downloading via 56Kb waiting for finish, then listening to pod-cast audio on our computer in awkward position....etc etc...
- The author does look at digital divide issues and in some ways I think these might be the most important and difficult issues to deal with, as it seems that the technological world is widening the divide between those that are educated and digitally fluent and those that are not – although maybe the One Laptop Per Child initiative is one of many schemes that is starting to address this problem.

Strengths of article/ Do the arguments resonate with my experiences?

- The generality and way the author takes potshots at all areas of problems that can affect children when using technology, does lead to a biased account. Although I think the author was intending this to bring to attention the many issues and maybe start governments, educators and parents thinking about the issues.
- It would have been better though to have had a more balanced account of positives and negatives – then this would have led to a stronger argument.