



Seesaw App, an Easier Form of Communication or a Safety Concern for Our Children?

Julia Colton

EasyChair preprints are intended for rapid dissemination of research results and are integrated with the rest of EasyChair.

June 23, 2021

Seesaw App for ease or is it a safety concern for our children

Julia Colton

Fundamentals of Computational Intelligence
Flinders University, South Australia

Colt0015@flinders.edu.au

Abstract

Is Seesaw app the solution for better communication between families and teachers or is it a form of manipulation to promote the necessity of documenting another aspect of life, as other social media apps encourage society to do? The difference with this app, however is that the people that are being documented are innocent children whose choice to have this microscopic lens on them is not their own. Do the benefits of being able to have the ease of communication outweigh a child's safety and freedom of choice?

1 Introduction

Seesaw app created by former PMs for Facebook Graham and Carl Sjogreen (Antonow, 2016). has been designed to be the main source of communication for schools between families and teachers. According to their website 'It is used by over 10M teachers, students, and family members every month across more than 75% of schools in the U.S.' (Seesaw, 2021)

Seesaw is a platform where teachers can update families on what is going on in their classroom setting and updates for individual students. This is done by photographing the child, or their work, or groups of children undertaking a task. Upper primary students can use the technology themselves, where they upload their own work to share. It is monitored by the teaching staff as to what content is uploaded and who is able to have access.

2 Benefits

This form of communication has either replaced or added to the traditional teacher notes, emails, newsletters and face to face meetings. The benefits of the app have been found with some

parents that struggle with language barriers, and parents with longer work hours. It has encouraged more involvement from parents that haven't had much involvement previously.

There is a benefit of ease, having the app on your phone with notifications on updates instead of being lost in the school bag or long list of daily emails. According to a case study done by Ryan on a Kindergarten in the US, this communication has caused further involvement with parents and their interest in their children's development. (Ryan, 2018)

The Ryan case study on Kindergartners, their parents and teachers detail many of these benefits, and supported by (Henderson, 1994) and (Shirvani, 2007) who both conclude that positive, frequent parent communication and involvement produce successful students and children that have increased achievement levels.

3 Concerns

Some of the concerns for parents are that teachers are spending too much time documenting the children instead of them teaching, and teachers having their time taken up with an additional communication device.

Further concerns are safety of children with social media apps and the introduction of this particular app by teachers so early in life to be normal, modelling that adults have the right to choose to document, by photographic means, the child and what they are doing. This social media documentation may already occur by parents, carers and peers, but it also now done by teachers; thereby creating the normalization of adults having the right to photograph and record and document a child's life continually. The concern

for children with the huge increase of online predators is with this modelling by trusted parties is, will they trust anyone with a camera, and smart phone? Normalizing it and ensuring children are compliant to let it happen, makes it very easy for perpetrators to use this type of device for grooming.

Grooming is where a child is lured (by behaviour that they do not recognise as “strange”), into a friendship in order for that person to sexually abuse them. (eSafetyCommissioner, 2021).

There has been a significant increase with online predators since covid (Safety, 2021), due to the increase of children having to go online.

Having a person in a position of power showing children that it is perfectly justifiable for them to film that child whenever they like, is displaying that it is ok for any other adult to do the same.

The other concern is, who is watching, and who is given access to the seesaw app?

Teachers spend a significant amount of time with students, 6 hours a day 5 days a week, at a minimum, and are the most trusting people next to parents and carers in young children’s lives. Bronfenbrenner’s bio-ecological model of development details the environmental influences on children and where teachers fit into their environment. Bronfenbrenner’s design displays that teachers are in the microsystem and mesosystem as influences in a child’s life alongside their family and peers. This model describes where children put their trust and have these parties make large decisions for them. (Härkönen, 2001)

The concern here is that children have a lack of choice whether they are filmed or their work is filmed. Developmentally primary and particularly junior primary aged students are only just discovering how to make choices. They are not able to make the decision whether it is ok or not to have their lives documented by photography and posted on an app. These choices are often given boundaries and guidelines by parents and teachers and the choices are limited, as to for example whether you should wear red or green sox. When it comes to health and safety, adults are required to guide them, such as crossing the road, health

food choices, appropriate clothing per the weather to give a few examples. (Scholastic, 2021)

Are the choices that parents, and educators are making to place children online with social media considered safe and for the benefit of the child? Or is it all to benefit the adults?

3.1 Who is watching?

Parents of the child are allowed access, and also any family members.

All parents have been allowed to access communication about their children in the past, in terms of report cards, parent teacher interviews, newsletters, email updates.

The difference between the seesaw app and information that is provided in a report card or newsletters is that it does not only detail your child but can also show other children. It notifies parents of location and whereabouts of the children and allows a form of instant messaging that other parents can see.

This is raising issues with families in domestic violence situations. This is being reported in media and becoming an issue with those families having to address it through the Family Courts. In one report from the ABC a parent details the unpleasant shock to know her abusive ex-partner was watching their child without her knowledge. The article describes how this ‘technology for children, particularly for use at school, can inadvertently provide a vulnerability for abusers to exploit’ (Bogle, 2018)

Further the article addresses the issue that intervention orders that are in place are not addressing online abuse and those “at risk” parties having to seek it to be expressly stipulated.

The schools are in a position that they are unable to deny access to any family member, unless there is a specific intervention order in place. To obtain intervention order can be a lengthy, costly and non-effective outcome in many cases. Parents do have the option to opt in or opt out of the app. If the latter is done by parents, however, children are still seeing the documentation of their friends and it can also cause the feeling of being left out. (Cook, 2018)

As well as this the parent or family member can show anyone that they like what is going on with

their child or what has been documented during the class at that time.

3.2 Where is it going?

Like Facebook once these social media apps commence, they seem to take on a life of their own, and they are highly addictive. (Centre, 2021) They stay and or expand despite any legal ramifications that they may cause. As with most cases for protection of children, it usually does not get prevented until a series of serious offences are committed. The implementation of additional and specific teaching about online safety needs to be monitored and updated regularly, aiming to teach children that they have the right to choose how they want their lives to be recorded. School safety teachings need to be expanded on where safety online needs to be addressed at a young age. The social networking apps are not going to stop and expansion of more apps where everyone's lives are documented and expressed (constructed as an exclusive form of communication) will continue.

- ANTONOW, A. S. E. 2016. *Interview with Adrian Graham and Carl Sjogreen* [Online]. Learning Stuff. Available: <https://learningstuff.org/interview-with-adrian-graham-and-carl-sjogreen-1bb6de384b7a> [Accessed 19 Mar 2021].
- BOGLE, A. 2018 *Family violence perpetrators using school apps and web portals to harass, stalk and intimidate* [Online]. ABC News. Available: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/science/2018-10-16/family-violence-perpetrators-using-school-apps-seesaw-to-stalk/10356776> [Accessed 19 Mar 2021].
- CENTRE, A. 2021. *What Is Social Media Addiction?* [Online]. Recovery wordwise LLC. [Accessed 31st Mar 2021].
- COOK, H. 2018. *'It was creepy': the parents opting out of technology in the classroom* [Online]. The Age. Available: <https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/it-was-creepy-the-parents-opting-out-of-technology-in-the-classroom-20180825-p4zzqf.html> [Accessed 16 Mar 2021].
- ESAFETYCOMMISSIONER. 2021. *Unwanted contact and grooming* [Online]. Australian Government. Available: <https://www.esafety.gov.au/parents/big-issues/unwanted-contact> [Accessed 26 Mar 2021].
- HÄRKÖNEN, U. 2001. The Bronfenbrenner ecological systems theory of human development.
- HENDERSON, A., & BERLA, N. 1994. A new generation of evidence: The family is critical to student achievement.: National Committee for Citizenship in Education.
- RYAN, A. 2018. What Happens When the Seesaw App is Used in a Kindergarten Classroom?
- SAFETY, N. O. 2021. *Online Grooming: An Increasing Threat During Lockdown* [Online]. UK National Education Group Ltd. Available: <https://nationalonlinesafety.com/wakeup-wednesday/online-grooming-an-increasing-threat-during-lockdown> [Accessed 26th Mar 2021].
- SCHOLASTIC. 2021. *Ages & Stages: Making Choices* [Online]. Available: <https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/ages-stages-making-choices/> [Accessed 19 Mar 2021].
- SEESAW. 2021. *Seesaw app* [Online]. San Francisco, CA 94104: Seesaw inc. Available: <https://web.seesaw.me/about> [Accessed].
- SHIRVANI, H. 2007. Effects of teacher communication on parents' attitudes and their children's behaviours at schools. *Education*, 128, 34-47.