

26/11/2020

Digi Everyday Advisory Board

We need to prepare an overview of the effects of digitalisation on wellbeing and inclusion

Conclusions of the Wellbeing and Inclusion in a Digital Society round table event

The Digi Everyday Advisory Board arranged a round table discussion on wellbeing and inclusion in a digital society on 29 October 2020.

Concepts of inclusion and wellbeing

One important finding of the round table discussion is that the concepts of digital wellbeing and digital inclusion are not clear. Their content must be clarified to enable their promotion and measurement in the right way.

These topics are closely interrelated. The discussion revealed that the concept of digital wellbeing was perceived as complex and unclear. It would be clearer to speak of the effects of digitalisation on wellbeing.

Digital inclusion is closely associated with wellbeing, and making digital services more accessible and supportive of inclusion also enhances wellbeing. Growth of inclusion and wellbeing in a digital society is also realised by promoting practical inclusion and wellbeing in general.

One way to classify the various forms of participation in society is in terms of information participation, planning participation, policymaking participation and operational participation. Besides the general definition of inclusion, digital inclusion particularly stresses accessibility, discoverability, usability, content, expertise, security, reliability, interaction, infrastructure and regulation.

The Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) divides inclusion and various inclusion-promoting activities into three areas:

- Participation in one's own life: the opportunity to live a unique life; the ability to determine the activity or service in which one is personally involved.
- Participation in communities and the processes of influencing: the ability to belong to groups and communities that are personally important, and to influence matters of personal importance; access to support for influencing.
- Involvement in the common good: the ability to work together; the opportunity to enjoy the common good and participate in producing and sharing the common good. The common good comprises action and values that lead to appreciation, praise and links to other people.

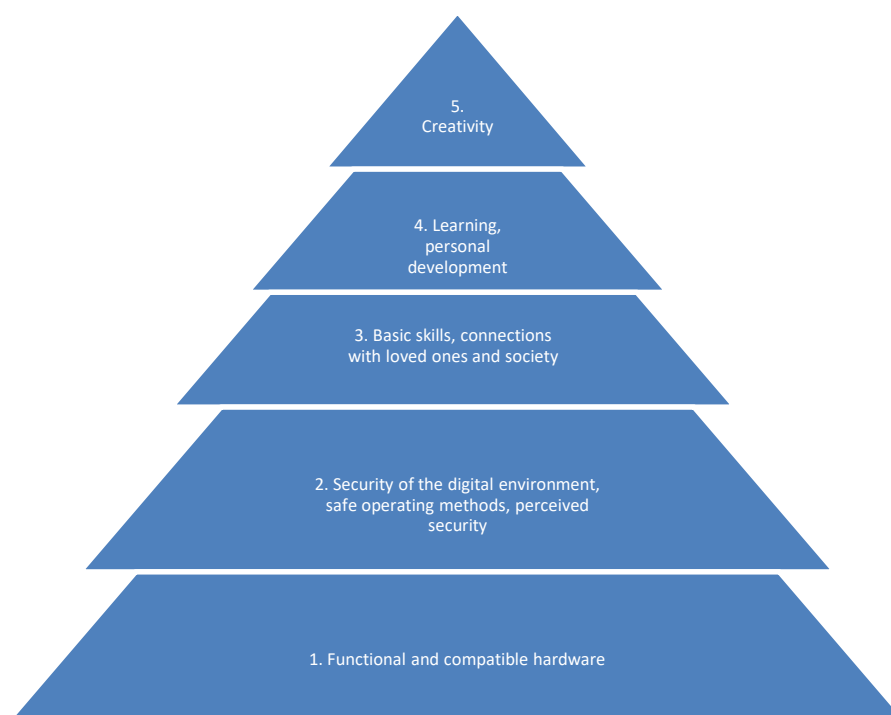
The same themes also emerged in the round table discussions. There is participation in society from a democratic point of view, participation in social debate, participation in local or national public policymaking, and so on. Inclusion is also an aspect of daily life, access to basic services and technical support, and staying

abreast of the continually evolving and digitalising world of work. This places particular emphasis on the forms of planning and operational involvement. Digitisation allows many people to participate in major developments, while others lack basic opportunities for digital inclusion, such as their own e-mail address or suitable hardware. The nuances of digital wellbeing are another aspect of this. For some people, digital wellbeing is about surviving everyday life. For others, it forms an enrichment of life.

Digital wellbeing may be defined as social, physical and mental wellbeing in an everyday world of digital hardware and services. One ambition for the round table discussions was an examination of *how* digitalisation affects our wellbeing.

The discussion suggested that instead of digital wellbeing, it would be worthwhile discussing the effects of digitalisation on human wellbeing. Digitalisation is already a significant part of society. It should not be conceptually compartmentalised or overstressed in terms of its importance. Digitalisation affects people in a wide variety of ways, and its effects are not divorced from other factors that affect wellbeing. Digitalisation also affects the wellbeing or distress of various people in a range of ways. The effects of digitalisation must accordingly be seen in a multifaceted way that combines various points of view.

One example of reviewing the various dimensions and levels of digital wellbeing that emerged in the round table discussion is the hierarchy of needs in digital life (Fiksari Finland Oy), in which active agency is built on basic issues and basic skills.



The round table also discussed the importance of human and face-to-face encounters. Not everything can or should be digitalised, and digital services should also retain a sense of human encounter. In many respects this reflection highlights the point that even where wellbeing is concerned, this is not merely a question of the functionality of technical instruments, or of the opportunity and ability to use them.

Follow-up and assessment

It is important to monitor and measure inclusion and wellbeing in a digital society. The round table was keen to see further reinforcement and clarification of the associated knowledge base. The VN TEAS project *Digital Inclusion in Finland*¹ implemented by the Technical Research Centre of Finland (VTT) and the University of Jyväskylä responds well to this in terms of inclusion.

The chosen definition of digital wellbeing naturally affects how it is assessed, and also how digital services are developed. The *Digital Wellbeing Roadmap*² developed by Demos Helsinki supports the creation of an assessment framework.

Digital wellbeing should not be seen only as an opportunity (for example, the available number of devices or Internet connections) or as the capacity to use digital services (digital literacy and skills, or available digital support). Nor are indicators of user satisfaction or accessibility of services alone sufficient. Such indicators must also be accompanied by a more thorough understanding of the changes that digitalisation will bring to society as a whole, for example from the perspective of inequality.

A great deal of information is already being collected to assess the effects of digitalisation on wellbeing. It will be important to collate all of this information and formulate a more comprehensive overview and appreciation, and this must be consistent and regular. Resources must be allocated to this work. The overview must be available to policymakers, specialists and service developers.

A wide variety of metrics will be needed (e.g. Internet access vs. restricting Internet use in a dependent relationship), because of extremes and the polarisation that has already emerged.

There was widespread support for collecting reliable, official and annual surveys or data.

Joint design of services

Co-designing digital services increases inclusion and improves the accessibility and usability of services. The main goal of developing user-centred services is to create services that bring wellbeing to their users and make life easier, rather than making it more difficult to use the services. Well-designed services can motivate people to take up digital services through their own goals and needs. It is also important to dispel fears concerning digitalisation and digital services.

Discussion of digital services highlighted experiential expertise, the involvement of end-users in development work at an early stage, and allowance for diversity. Service development should also take place in broad teams within organisations, enabling comprehensive consideration of a range of perspectives from technical aspects to material content and client work.

The prospects were considered for creating standards or a standard model for digital service developers that would describe various parties, responsibilities, roles, and such aspects as user involvement, evaluation of the usability and effectiveness of services, and continuous feedback gathering and co-creation. A rapid pace of processes and development was also called for – many users are not staying abreast of changes.

¹ [Further details of the VN TEAS project](#) *Digital Inclusion in Finland* (in Finnish)

² [Demos Helsinki publication](#): *Digital Wellbeing Roadmap* (in Finnish)

The discussion suggested that essential elements in high quality, user-oriented service development include:

- comprehensive service design in a user-oriented way
- consideration of user group diversity and a targeted understanding of support users, local residents or citizens in terms of their needs and consultation
- continuous requests for, and gathering of feedback
- continuous service development based on feedback.

Competence development should also be resourced. There is no need to reinvent the wheel and design separate services all the time. Open interfaces, available data and ecosystems may be used. It was also felt that there is an inability to use or adequately apply the valuable information gathered in organisations, especially for special groups.

More attention should be paid to whole life cycle planning of services and applications. The private and third sectors must be more closely involved in development. Subscriber responsibilities should not be overlooked (e.g. improving procurement expertise). Best practices should be shared!

Proposals

Responsibility should be assigned to some party for forming an overview of the effects of digitalisation on inclusion and wellbeing. Overview formulation should make extensive use of information from various studies and investigations.

With respect to monitoring, it is proposed that regular population surveys measuring wellbeing and inclusion should include indicators that measure the impact of digitalisation and enable monitoring and reporting of progress.

The development of digital services and the assessment of service quality must be continued as networked co-operation, sharing experiences and increasing user-oriented development between national and local government, and the third and private sectors.