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How does the Concept of the Digital Native Affect the Early Years of Learning?

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Introduction



The term “**Digital Native**” coined by Prensky (2001) was proposed to describe young people born as **native speakers** to use digital language and devices and is emphasized as an essential part of understanding the development of children in the technology world, especially post-pandemic.

This **case study** aimed to investigate how the concept of the Digital Native affects the early years of learning and to examine the changes in the new generation of children’s nature of play and learning.

Method and Sample



Semi-structured interviews with **6** participants in a cross comparative data set were used; one group born **after the 1980s** and considered **digitally native**, and the other, born **before the 1980s** and considered **digital immigrants**.

References

Charts

Poster



*Using technology in the classroom changed the **physical learning environment**, affected **communication between educators, parents, and children** and, finally, there was an impact of technology on both **policy and curriculum** and educators’ **beliefs and practices** were thought to have a strong influence. This suggested a need to **reconsider the concept of the digital native**, as exposure to and experience of technology should not be seen as a **paradigm based on age**.*

Analysis



Grounded Theory method was used to analyze the data. **The four key findings** were the **impact on the learning environment, communication between educators, parents and children, educators’ beliefs and practices, and policy and curriculum**, which were all affected by using of technology in the early years of learning. Although the data was separated into two age groups, the data between them are **similar** even though they may experience differences in their childhood and technology use.

Discussion



The data **aligns** with the assertion that children or the “digital natives” do **learn differently**. There is **also** a shared understanding of change within the environment which affects communication. This has an impact on policy and curriculum as technology is believed to support children’s learning and development.

-However, the data does not align with Prensky’s original hypotheses as even though experience with technology differed, participants shared **similar views**. This **disconnects** with the **principle of the digital native and immigrant divide**

