

Which Form of Reading is best for Student Learning: Digital or Print Reading?

Posted on July 10, 2024

The advancement in technology has entitled the students of the modern age as digital natives who are surrounded by innovative equipment like tablets, iPads, smartphones, and computers. Students are standing at the crossroads of digital or print modes of reading due to technological progress. Similarly, for other stakeholders like parents, teachers, and policymakers, it is difficult to examine which mode is better regarding learning perspectives. The ultimate purpose of digital or print reading is understanding and comprehending the given information for retention purposes. In this scenario, the overall mental performance in alliance with the reading purpose is a decisive factor to determine which mode has efficient learning outcomes. Meanwhile, various other factors revolving around psychological, social, and health parameters are pivotal to such determination. Researchers from across the World have concluded that student learning can be improved manifold by using print reading mode instead of digital one (Benson). However, this essay will explore that print reading is far better than digital reading for student learning due to multiple reasons like restored absorption of information, lessened distractions, convenience for the human brain and eyes, enhanced pleasure for reading, amplified brain power, improved memory capacity, and later age brain functioning, etc.

Undoubtedly, the global education system has witnessed a massive transformation from the print to the digital world during the pandemic. It lasted implacable imprints on the learning aspects of students worldwide. Huge textbooks along with a massive workload concerning homework, assignments, and exams took an abrupt shift toward the digital mode of reading. This colossal perspective directly hit the student's focus, retention, and understanding of the material. Universally, print reading is considered as meditation which increases the student's focus on paper by integrated use of senses along with stimuli (Benson). Students are required to understand, comprehend, and retain the given information and these purposes can be best achieved through paper reading. Researchers concluded that digital reading is beneficial for main points or tickers like news headlines but for long and complex texts, digital versions lose credibility. Digital content can be read more quickly but it impairs comprehension along with distractions. The reader would be unable to recall or fetch the previously read information even during the same sitting (Hurt). In addition, it portrays spatial challenges to the reader as in print reading associations on paper help the brain to retain and recall the information at later times. But scrolling the digital material does not allow such freedom. So, the performance-based reading urges students to the paper mode.

Moreover, print reading is a blessing for the relief of human eyes and brain. Neuroscience studies have proved fact that print reading has a retarded impact on health aspects. Various parts of the human brain are specifically associated with the mode of reading which activates specific cells to proceed further. For example, print reading stimulates emotional processing by activating the

prefrontal and cingulate cortex. In addition, it also activates the parietal cortex which results in visual and spatial processes helping the reader to retain the information for a long time. But on screen, such stimulation is not achieved as in fact, quick reading does not allow the brain functions to work properly. Similarly, print reading relieves the human eye by reducing eyestrain as it is massive in digital reading. Turning pages provide unintentional relief to the eyes along with the absence of screen rays which evolve from the screen during digital reading. Such emitting of radiation disturbs the biological fabric of the human eye. Frequent usage of LED screens results in visual and brain fatigue as it is a constant source of a 'flickering glow' which retards efficiency over time (Benson). In other words, the print reading phenomenon pours positive impacts concerning the health aspects of the human brain and eyes.

Furthermore, print reading has a tremendous capacity to enhance brain power along with improved memory capacity. When students confront long texts, the human brain works in a network system to perform in a better way. For example, the brain part which recognizes faces also works in lines to recognize letters, while the other part tries to understand and comprehend the text by recalling past events. Such a network acts automatically with the help of the conscious mind (Hurt). In this context, the cognitive development of the human mental process enhances by reading printed material in alliance with the stimuli. But in the digital mode of reading brain has to face problems in processing the content along with interruptions. The network formation during digital reading does not prove efficient as in less time the brain is not able to comprehend the data in a step-by-step manner. This is the reason that digital reading does not allow to retain even the previous paragraph with complete understating. Another disadvantage of digital reading is the development of a 'skim habit' instead of thorough understating (Hurt). Ultimately it retards human memory capacity and over time memory efficiency lessens.

Finally, from the above discussion, it can be concluded that students are better able to learn efficiently through print reading than through digital reading. Advanced technology and incidents like the pandemic have transformed reading mode from print to digital. But due to multiple reasons, like better retention, a good understating of the content, and healthful impacts on human eyes and brain, the print mode is more efficient and rewarding. In addition, brain parts functioning and memory capacity can be empowered with print reading as well. Digital reading may helpful for scrolling websites, social media platforms, or leisure time reading but for students' learning purposes, print media is far better and more zealous.

Work Cited

Benson, K. "Reading on Paper Versus Screens: What's the Difference? Brainfacts." (2020).Zartman, I.

Hurt, A, E. "Will You Learn Better from Reading on Screen or on Paper?" (2021).