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Nurturing Learning through Screens: Good Practices in Digital Engagement for Children

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Abstract

As a result of undergoing digital transformation, the educational framework is being modified in its organization, goals, and steps. Over the past two decades, the world has experienced profound growth in information and communication technologies, thereby transforming the world into a global digital village. It has also changed the processes and methods of acquiring and communicating knowledge, especially in the context of preschool education. Today's children are coming of age in a world increasingly dominated by technology and the digital world, and teachers are doing their best to ensure that their guidance around learners' digital engagement is effective and developmentally suitable.

This study aims to identify good practices that support and enhance the learning experiences of young learners through digital technology. In light of the particular focus of the research on early childhood education, it seeks to understand how teachers use digital technology to foster self-directed learning, creativity, and collaboration in children during the lessons. The research was conducted with a sample of 63 early childhood preschool teachers in the schools located in the Emirate of Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates. The participants were selected through purposive sampling, and the data was collected via semi-structured interviews. The data collection tool was validated and tested for reliability.

Findings noted that participating teachers practiced various superior teaching methods that incorporated technology within the classroom. These methods included enabling children to utilize self-regulation skills while engaging with gadgets, thus supporting independence and responsibility in learning. Teachers described their responsibility in scaffolding digital engagement, making sure that the time allocated to screens was engaging, interactive, and educational.

An example of this was using the constructivism learning theory to design activities that allowed children to explore, solve problems, and create knowledge electronically. In addition to this, children were socially engaged through digital collaboration, peer interaction, and digital storytelling, regardless

of whether the setting was in person, virtual, or hybrid.

As the study emphasizes, thoughtfully applied digital technologies can enhance the experience of learning at an early stage remarkably. It is the educator's responsibility to change the passive, mindless interaction with the screen into thoughtful, mind-stimulating, and educational interactions which foster learning at all levels, including intellectual, emotional, and social. It offers practical suggestions for teachers, those creating the curricula, and even the policymakers which focus on drawing up the educational objectives and principles which would define and encourage the use of digital technologies in early childhood education.

Keywords: Early Childhood Education, Digital Learning, Screen Engagement, Constructivist Theory