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THE IMPACT OF READING ON COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT AND INFORMATION CULTURE

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Abstract: The article highlights the role of reading in the intellectual and spiritual development of an individual and its influence on shaping information culture. The process of reading is interpreted as an important source for enriching human thinking, broadening worldview, and developing independent and systematic reasoning skills. Through reading, students and young people acquire a critical approach to receiving, processing, and evaluating information, while also strengthening creative thinking and problem-solving abilities. In the context of the digital society, reading serves not only as a source of knowledge but also as a tool for navigating information flows, distinguishing reliable data, and perceiving it at the level of cultural values. At the same time, reading plays a significant role in enhancing speech development, aesthetic taste, and devotion to both national and universal values.

Keywords: reading, cognitive development, thinking, critical thinking, information culture, creative thinking, knowledge, digital society.

In the modern digital environment, the sharp increase in the flow of information requires individuals to acquire skills in critical and creative thinking, searching for information, evaluating, and processing it. The stable cognitive foundation of this process is largely formed through reading: deep reading activates attention control, semantic analysis, memory, and communication competencies in a complex manner, while also strengthening speech culture and intellectual independence. The practice of “deep reading” involves analyzing the underlying ideas and layers of meaning in the text, carefully examining the author’s position and logic of arguments, comparing them with personal experience, and drawing conclusions. As a result, a broad worldview, a culture of argumentation, and the ability to make responsible decisions are developed.

Information culture consists of components such as searching for information, filtering it, verifying reliability, citing sources, respecting copyright, and adhering to digital ethics. These competencies are directly linked to reading: regular reading expands the semantic foundation, protects individuals from false conclusions, and teaches how to distinguish facts from opinions, as well as to compare statistical and textual evidence. Therefore, researching reading as a fundamental mechanism for enhancing cognitive development and information culture is both scientifically and practically relevant.

The purpose of this study is to theoretically and practically substantiate the impact of reading on indicators of cognitive development (attention, memory, thinking, speech, critical and creative thinking) and information culture (searching, evaluating, processing, ethical and social responsibility). The relevance of the topic is manifested, on the one hand, in the need to support deep reading competencies at a time when reading practices are competing with digital media consumption, and on the other hand, in the educational system’s tasks of increasing functional

literacy and media-information literacy. From a theoretical perspective, reading occurs at the intersection of sociocultural and psychological factors that stimulate cognitive development. During the reading process, concepts and categories expand through the language system, semantic networks broaden, which in turn activates complex operations of thinking comparison, generalization, induction, and deduction. Reflection during reading strengthens metacognitive control: the reader monitors their own understanding, identifies unclear points, and consciously chooses strategies (rereading, annotation, note-taking).

Reading is closely linked with attention and working memory. Processing the text in logical blocks, tracking cause-and-effect chains, and following characters' motivations develop working memory capacity and the ability to "sustain attention." At the same time, the enrichment of vocabulary and regular interaction with syntactic structures make verbal thinking clearer and more flexible; communication competencies, as well as the culture of written and oral expression, are enhanced.

Critical and creative thinking components become especially active during reading. Argumentative and scientific-popular texts require assessing the quality of evidence, source reliability, interpretation of statistical data, and coherence between argument and conclusion. Fiction, in turn, stimulates empathy and perspective-taking, activating creative mechanisms such as finding alternative solutions and generating unexpected associations. The synergy of these two dimensions increases the capacity to solve complex real-life problems.

In shaping information culture, reading serves as the main foundation. Strategies of working with texts-keyword searching, annotation and note-taking, citation and source referencing, avoiding plagiarism are naturally acquired through interaction with books. Individuals with strong reading experience can more quickly compare sources in the digital environment, identify the author's intent, distinguish advertising and manipulative techniques, and apply basic fact-checking methods.

Reading in digital environments also requires consideration. While screen reading facilitates rapid scanning and navigation through hypertexts, it may lead to distraction and superficial comprehension. Therefore, balancing digital and traditional reading, and introducing practices of "slow reading" (annotated reading, highlighting, questioning, short written reflections) are crucial. E-books and audiobooks, meanwhile, provide significant opportunities for inclusivity and time management; with appropriate methodology, they also support deep understanding.

Sociocultural factors-family, school, library, and peer environment-play a decisive role in shaping reading habits. Shared reading within the family, discussions about texts, and giving children freedom in choosing books increase motivation. In educational institutions, working with texts beyond textbooks, organizing "literature circles," "booktalks," small-scale research, and project-based assignments requiring source analysis contribute to strengthening information culture in practice. Libraries serve as a fundamental platform by offering curated collections, digital catalogs, and training on media-information literacy.

Among the methodological solutions that determine the effectiveness of teaching reading strategies are developing purposeful questions, creating "roadmaps" of text structure, writing summaries and annotations, conducting intertextual comparisons, interpreting the author's standpoint, and reconstructing the chain of evidence and logic. In this process, learners develop the ability to identify the type of source, genre features, audience, and communicative purpose. Assessment and monitoring are also essential. Measuring reading comprehension only through tests is insufficient; instead, short analytical notes, logical diagrams, infographics, oral defenses, and argumentation based on sources should be employed to evaluate deep comprehension, critical-creative approaches, and elements of information ethics in a comprehensive manner.

At the level of practical recommendations, educational institutions may introduce reading weeks, thematic library classes, “from book to idea” projects, interdisciplinary integrated reading assignments, and curated digital reading pathways. For families, daily short reading rituals, free conversations about texts, and considering children’s interests in book selection are effective practices. For libraries, conducting practical workshops on media-information literacy alongside digital resources, as well as compiling recommendation lists tailored to the local community, prove beneficial.

Reading simultaneously activates multifaceted mechanisms of cognitive development and fosters core competencies of information culture through practical exercises. In the digital age, consciously managing this process-teaching deep reading strategies, cultivating habitual source engagement, and creating systems of social support-is one of the most effective ways to enhance personal intellectual potential and strengthen society’s information security.

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