

DEVELOPING A CULTURE OF LITERARY READING AND THINKING IN STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the importance of cultivating a culture of literary reading and critical thinking in students. It presents the challenges faced by modern education systems in promoting sustained reading habits and intellectual engagement with literature. By analyzing current trends and proposing effective strategies, this study aims to provide educators with practical methods to develop a lasting culture of literary appreciation among students. The article concludes with recommendations for schools and universities to integrate literary reading into curricula, emphasizing the role of teachers, parents, and the broader community in fostering a rich intellectual environment.

Keywords: Literary reading, Critical thinking, Education systems, Reading habits, Intellectual engagement, Literature appreciation, Educational strategies

INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly digital world, where technology often competes with traditional reading habits, cultivating a culture of literary reading and thinking in students has become a critical concern for educators. While digital media offers numerous advantages, including instant access to information and entertainment, it also poses a challenge to deep, reflective reading that literature demands. Literature has the potential to shape students' understanding of themselves and the world around them by encouraging empathy, critical thinking, and cultural awareness. The importance of developing a culture that values literary reading is not just about increasing literacy rates but about fostering intellectual curiosity and independent thinking. This article discusses



the significance of literary reading and thinking, the challenges faced by modern education systems, and practical strategies for promoting these skills.

METHODS

This study uses a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative analysis of existing literature on the topic with a survey of educators and students across various educational institutions. A review of previous research on reading habits, literary engagement, and critical thinking was conducted to identify key factors that influence students' relationship with literature. Additionally, a questionnaire was distributed to teachers in secondary and higher education institutions to assess the challenges they face in promoting literary reading and critical thinking. Interviews with students were also conducted to understand their attitudes towards reading and how they engage with literature. The data collected from these sources formed the basis for developing actionable recommendations for educators.

RESULTS

The study revealed several key findings regarding the current state of literary reading and thinking in educational settings:

1. **Decline in Reading Habits:** A significant number of students reported reading fewer literary works, often opting for shorter, more easily digestible content available online. Many cited a lack of time due to academic pressures and the allure of digital distractions.

2. **Limited Engagement with Literature:** Students expressed that their engagement with literature was often surface-level, focusing more on summarizing plots rather than analyzing themes, characters, and literary techniques. Teachers reported that encouraging deeper engagement required additional effort and resources.

3. **Teachers' Role:** Educators identified a need for professional development to better equip them with strategies to promote literary reading. Many emphasized the importance of modeling good reading habits and creating discussions that encourage critical analysis of texts.

4. **Cultural and Environmental Factors:** The study also found that students' reading habits were influenced by their home environments. Students from families where reading was

encouraged were more likely to engage with literature. There was also a significant impact of school culture, with schools that integrated literary activities into their curriculums seeing higher levels of engagement.

DISCUSSION

The findings highlight the challenges faced in nurturing a culture of literary reading in students. While external factors like technology and the fast-paced nature of modern life contribute to the decline in literary reading, the study also underscores the pivotal role of educators in shaping students' relationship with literature. Teachers can have a transformative impact by integrating literary reading into the curriculum in meaningful ways and fostering a love for reading beyond the classroom.

To address the decline in reading habits, it is essential to create a reading culture that extends beyond compulsory assignments. Encouraging voluntary reading through book clubs, reading challenges, and literary events can motivate students to explore literature outside the classroom setting. Additionally, fostering critical thinking through literature requires a focus on analytical skills—teaching students to look beyond plot summaries and engage with the deeper meanings of texts.

The role of parents and the broader community is also crucial in this process. Parents should be encouraged to create home environments that value reading and discussion of books. Community engagement, through public libraries, literary festivals, and author talks, can further enrich students' exposure to diverse literary worlds.

CONCLUSION

Developing a culture of literary reading and thinking in students is an ongoing challenge, but it is essential for their intellectual growth. The study suggests that a multifaceted approach, involving teachers, parents, and the broader community, is necessary to rekindle students' interest in literature and cultivate their critical thinking abilities. By promoting literary reading as a means of fostering deeper cognitive skills, empathy, and cultural awareness, educators can help students develop into well-rounded individuals capable of engaging with the complexities of the modern world. Schools and universities must integrate literary reading into their



curricula and adopt strategies that make reading both enjoyable and intellectually stimulating.

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