

ADDRESSING THE EFFECTS OF DECREASING ATTENTION SPAN OF LEARNERS

by:

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With the emerging utilization of technology, the decrease in the attention span of students is evident, especially in the classroom setting. In an article written by Eric Debétaz, he cited a study conducted by Microsoft that looked into the attention span of learners between the years 2000 and 2015. The year 2000 is said to be the dawn of the mobile revolution. It was found that the attention spans of the respondents decreased by 4 seconds, from a rate of 12 seconds down to 8 seconds. And this decrease is largely attributed to the nature of technology and its constant stimulation to the viewers.

This attention span decrease greatly affects how students behave and perform in class. The interest of learners to listen and become attentive to what the teacher is discussing in front has become lesser as well. Thus, the goal of cultivating their minds and honing their skills becomes more work for the teachers.

But, what really is to blame for this decrease in attention span? The constant stimulation brought about by gadgets to the learners' attention is one of the primary reasons for this. They feel excited over holding on to their smartphones or tablets and being able to browse through social media or play their favorite mobile game. The sound of the notifications from these applications is like music to their ears, and they start fidgeting once their gadgets vibrate or ring. Thus, it becomes more difficult for them to concentrate on what they should be focusing on inside the classroom. And the more effort the teacher needs to exert, not only to teach them but to get their attention back.

Another reason for this is the way the information is presented to learners. With the advancement in technology and the great visuals they find on the internet, learners

look for aesthetics as something they could learn easily from. It can be claimed that the learners of today have developed more on the visual side of learning, rather than with the other types. Also, since the internet presents data in small, bite-sized pieces of information, the generation of learners seeks the same mode of presentation when it comes to their lessons. They are easily bored with long narratives that they have to read or listen to. They cannot cope with complex explanations or derivations, which will simply lead to one definite answer. They would rather watch video tutorials of how things are done rather than follow a list of steps or procedures, which they find tiring to read and follow through.

With this trend of decrease in their attention span, teachers have found it more difficult to execute the lesson and involve the learners in the different learning tasks. Thus, teachers resort to incorporating technology into their strategies. The use of video presentations for lessons, or games to explain the concept further, or evaluate learning, has now become a trend in education. Different platforms have also come out, giving teachers different options to utilize during their classroom discussions, without having to prepare tediously for every lesson. This very well defines the dynamics of education, which no longer relies on paper and books, but progresses with technology as well.

Also, the teacher may look for ways to help the students develop self-control over their decreasing attention span, which may be a better way to address the issue. In an article written by Margo Bastow, she enumerated ways in which concentration among learners can be supported.

Engaging Information

Students' attention can be sustained by using a variety of interactive techniques to keep the learners involved in the teaching-learning process, such as storytelling, hands-on activities, and collaborative work. Teachers should also encourage active review and

reinforce material through practice activities, games, and other creative methods to make learning more engaging and capture the interest of the learners.

Bite-Sized Learning

Microlearning is an e-learning format that is a more convenient, yet effective way of enabling students to control their time and learning experiences. This can be utilized by the teachers to address the attention span issue among the learners. Also, learning at school should avoid covering too many topics in one sitting. Teachers should create their lessons in a clear, on-point, and precise way that covers important knowledge and skills and can improve focus and concentration among learners.

Identify Triggers

With all the distractions, learners must also be taught how to identify their personal distractions and triggers. In this way, they can devise their own mechanism for dealing with them, and help themselves develop focus and concentration on their studies.

Also, this will help them realize the importance of self-control and develop independence in their learning styles.

Attention Strategies

Teachers can help students manage their stress levels so that they can focus and concentrate on tasks inside the classroom. Meditation, breathing exercises, and journaling are great ways to help reduce stress. This can help the learners control themselves, not only in school-related tasks but in their everyday routines as well.

Learners often do not realize the negative effects of technology on their ability to focus. If they can be given help to understand this, they can develop strategies for themselves to improve focus and concentration and enhance learning, as well.

References:

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