GENERATION OF SCREENAGERS AND EDUCATION: POSSIBILITIES, IMPACTS AND CHALLENGES FOR THE CONTEMPORARY SCHOOL
–GENERACIÓN DE SCREENAGERS Y EDUCACIÓN: POSIBILIDADES, IMPACTOS Y DESAFÍOS PARA LA ESCUELA CONTEMPORÁNEA

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Resumen

El auge de los screenagers, jóvenes cuya socialización, ocio y aprendizaje ocurren ante pantallas, tensiona los ritmos, lenguajes y mediaciones de la escuela, generando oportunidades creativas y riesgos de atención fragmentada y desinformación. El objetivo fue analizar la relación entre screenagers y educación, identificando posibilidades e impactos, el recorrido escolar digital y los desafíos para docentes e instituciones. Se empleó una revisión narrativa focalizada en tres fuentes ancla (consumo audiovisual juvenil, marco sociocultural y crítica al mito del "nativo digital"), organizando la evidencia en matrices de hábitos, competencias y mediaciones. Los resultados muestran desplazamiento hacia microcontenidos y plataformas, heterogeneidad de competencias (dominio instrumental vs. alfabetización crítica) y brechas asociadas a capital cultural y políticas escolares. Se concluye que no basta "usar tecnología": es necesario diseñar mediaciones pedagógicas que integren producción multimodal con estándares académicos, alfabetización informacional y de datos, y evaluación formativa, acompañadas de desarrollo profesional docente y marcos éticos de ciudadanía digital.

Palabras clave: Screenagers, Educación, Competencias digitales, Alfabetización mediática e informacional, Producción multimodal, Economía de la atención, Diseño instruccional.

Abstract

The rise of screenagers, youth whose socialization, leisure, and learning unfold through screens, has strained schools' tempos, languages, and mediations, creating both creative opportunities and risks such as fragmented attention and misinformation. This study aimed to analyze the relationship between screenagers and education, identifying possibilities and impacts, the digital school trajectory, and challenges for teachers and institutions. A focused narrative review was

conducted using three anchor sources (youth audiovisual consumption, a sociocultural framework, and a critique of the "digital native" myth), organizing evidence into matrices of habits, competencies, and mediations. Findings show a shift toward micro-content and platforms, heterogeneous competencies (instrumental fluency vs. critical literacy), and gaps associated with cultural capital and school policies. We conclude that merely "using technology" is insufficient: pedagogy must design mediations that integrate multimodal production with academic standards, information and data literacy, and formative assessment, supported by teacher professional development and ethical frameworks for digital citizenship.

Keywords: Screeners, Education, Digital competencies, Media and Information Literacy, Multimodal production, Attention economy, Instructional design.

Sumário

A ascensão dos "screenagers" — jovens cuja socialização, lazer e aprendizado ocorrem em frente a telas — está tensionando os ritmos, as linguagens e as mediações das escolas, gerando oportunidades criativas e riscos de atenção fragmentada e desinformação. O objetivo foi analisar a relação entre os screenagers e a educação, identificando possibilidades e impactos, a trajetória da aprendizagem digital e os desafios para professores e instituições. Foi utilizada uma revisão narrativa focada em três fontes principais (consumo audiovisual por jovens, contexto sociocultural e uma crítica ao mito do "nativo digital"), organizando as evidências em matrizes de hábitos, habilidades e mediações. Os resultados mostram uma mudança em direção a microconteúdos e plataformas, heterogeneidade de habilidades (domínio instrumental versus letramento crítico) e lacunas associadas ao capital cultural e às políticas escolares. O estudo conclui que simplesmente "usar a tecnologia" é insuficiente: é necessário desenvolver abordagens pedagógicas que integrem a produção multimodal com padrões acadêmicos, letramento informacional e de dados e avaliação formativa, acompanhadas de formação continuada para professores e marcos éticos para a cidadania digital.

Palavras-chave: Geração digital, Educação, Habilidades digitais, Alfabetização midiática e informacional, Produção multimodal, Economia da atenção, Design instrucional.

Introduction

Over the last two decades, the ubiquity of screens and digital platforms has shaped a sociotechnical ecosystem in which children and young people build identity, sociability and learning. The concept of *screenagers* describes a cohort immersed in short-form content, transmedia convergence and mobile communication, characterized by fast audiovisual consumption. Research shows a shift from linear television to platforms and micro-content, associated with immediacy, algorithmic segmentation and personalization, which alters attention rhythms and challenges traditional school dynamics (Cortés & Fuentes, 2023). However, digital culture does not operate uniformly. Social class, cultural capital and platform conditions mediate competencies and opportunities; therefore, the idea of homogeneous "digital natives" is problematic (Sequeiros & López, 2016). Although many young people easily use devices, gaps remain in information literacy, privacy awareness, critical reading of algorithms and multimodal academic production. Instrumental mastery does not equal digital academic competence, meaning schools cannot rely on spontaneous network socialization and must implement deliberate pedagogical mediation (Acosta, 2022).

This article analyzes the relationship between screenagers and education by examining their digital trajectories, identifying challenges for teachers and schools, and proposing

pedagogical strategies grounded in evidence. Based on a narrative review drawing on empirical and theoretical studies, the objective is to understand educational impacts and define mediations that connect digital practices with academic learning (Cortés et al., 2023; Sequeiros et al., 2016; Acosta, 2022).

Materials and Methods

A focused narrative review was selected due to its suitability for analyzing complex and multidimensional phenomena such as youth media practices and their relationship with education. This approach integrates heterogeneous evidence; empirical studies, theoretical essays and research Works, through interpretive and critical synthesis, unlike systematic reviews that prioritize exhaustive and replicable procedures (Snyder, 2019; Grant & Booth, 2009; Ferrari, 2015). It is particularly appropriate when studying evolving cultural categories such as *screenagers* or *digital natives*. The study aims not to exhaust all literature but to construct a coherent interpretive framework combining empirical evidence, theoretical reflection and educational analysis. Although not systematic, some transparency criteria from PRISMA-ScR were considered to ensure clarity of objectives, selection criteria and synthesis description (Tricco et al., 2018). From a hermeneutic-interpretative perspective, knowledge emerges from dialogue between sources and context, recognizing that digital technologies are socially situated practices shaping identities and learning (Boell & Cecez, 2014; Selwyn, 2016; Buckingham, 2008).

Inclusion criteria required thematic relevance to youth media practices, diversity of approaches and academic accessibility (indexed or open access). Searches were conducted in Google Scholar, Scopus, Dialnet and institutional repositories using Spanish and English

keywords such as "digital youth," "screenagers," and "digital skills." Publications from 2015–2023 were prioritized, along with key theoretical works (Prensky, 2001; Buckingham, 2008), ensuring conceptual relevance and academic rigor while avoiding generational essentialism (Sequeiros Bruna et al., 2016). Among the selected anchor sources, the following were established:

➢ Empirical study in communication.
➢ Cortés Quesada, Barceló Ugarte and Fuentes Cortina (2023) analyzed the audiovisual consumption of Millennials and Generation Z through a survey (n = 642), highlighting the preference for short content ("snackables") and the shift towards digital platforms. This study provides recent quantitative evidence on juvenile media habits.
➢ Theoretical framework in digital culture.
➢ Sequeiros Bruna, Puente and López Jiménez (2016) propose to understand the relationship between youth-culture-ICT as a prism, avoiding generational reductionisms. His contribution is key to challenging the homogeneous idea of "digital natives."
➢ Research paper on digital skills.
➢ Acosta (2022) problematizes the myth of "digital natives" and documents gaps in informational and critical competences. This work allows to articulate media consumption with digital literacy.
➢ Extraction and synthesis procedure.
➢ The Matrix Method was used (Garrard, 2020), constructing extraction matrices that included: Author and year, type of study, population or corpus, key findings, educational implications, in addition, thematic matrices were developed organized into six analytical axes defined in the protocol: Relación con el universo

educativo, recorrido escolar digital, posibilidades pedagógicas, impactos socioculturales, desafíos docentes, reflexión crítica interdisciplinaria.

This procedure is also based on the qualitative analysis techniques proposed by Miles et al. (2014), who highlight the utility of matrices and visualizations to strengthen inferential validity. The synthesis was carried out through an iterative process of comparative reading and thematic coding. Following Boell and Cecez (2014), the revision was understood as a dynamic process of meaning construction, not as a simple aggregation of results. Quality considerations and control of bias to mitigate selection and confirmation bias, the following strategies were adopted; triangulation of approaches (empirical, theoretical and competency), prioritization of indexed or institutional sources, transparent explanation of the procedure, contrasting findings with additional critical literature (Selwyn, 2016; Buckingham, 2008). It is recognized that

educational inference derived from media consumption studies is indirect and requires triangulation with complementary pedagogical research (Grant & Booth, 2009). Likewise, the narrative revision is not intended to establish statistical generalizations, but rather to provide an informed interpretation. Among the main limitations are recognized; systematic non-exhaustiveness, possible interpretive bias inherent in qualitative análisis; reliance on sources available in open access; however, these limitations are consistent with the exploratory and interpretative nature of the study (Snyder, 2019).

Results and Discussion

Table 1 summarizes the main findings of the review regarding the screenager generation and its relationship with the educational universe. The table organizes, by analytical axes, media practices, their possibilities and pedagogical impacts, and challenges for teachers and institutions, linking them to the selected empirical and theoretical sources:

Table 1. *Results*

Axis	Key findings	Educational implications	References
1. Segregation and educational use	Audiovisual use oriented toward the educational sphere; possibilities of ubiquitous access, informal and personalized learning, increased content creation and circulation of memes, podcasts and communities of practice; expansion from linear TV to platforms; fragmented and asynchronous consumption.	Possibilities: ubiquitous access, informal and personalized learning, creative remix (short videos, memes, podcasts), communities of practice, expansion of multimedia content, authentic tasks connected to the curriculum. Critical impacts/intersections: fragmented attention, misinformation and echo chambers; need for media literacy and critical evaluation criteria; sustained elaboration requires pedagogical mediation.	Cortés Quesada (2023); Bartolomé, Llorente & Fuentes (2021)
1a. Socio-cultural perspective	Effects are not universal; inequalities (cultural capital), family support and school conditions mediate them; the link with school knowledge depends on institutional strategies.	Avoid essentialism; design contextualized policies and pedagogies; invest in resources, teacher training and guidance; promote hybrid trajectories (face-to-face + digital) and collaborative online learning.	Sequiros Bruna & López Jiménez (2016)
2. Digital generation and school trajectory	Gaps persist: source evaluation, privacy, authorship and instrumental mastery ≠ academic digital competence.	Authorship and evaluation: guide multimodal production with citation and quality standards; integrate information literacy and digital ethics; strengthen academic writing.	Acosta Silva (2022); Cortés Quesada et al. (2023)
3a. Challenges: preference for micro-format choreographies	Attention and deep cognitive elaboration load are affected.	Alternate short capsules with elaboration activities (critical summaries, argumentative maps, journals); second-order questions; harmonize media rhythm with academic rigor.	Cortés Quesada et al. (2023)
3b. Challenges: limited comprehension	Media literacy and verification; confusion between "ICT use" and critical thinking.	Institutional media literacy pathways; source evaluation and transversal digital ethics.	Bruna et al. (2016); Acosta Silva (2022)
3c. Challenges: multimodal production with academic standards	Consumption > authorship; weaknesses in traceability and licensing.	Promote responsible authorship: bibliographies, podcasts with technical sheets, infographics with sources; rubrics evaluating form, accessibility and ethics.	Acosta Silva (2022)
3d. Challenges: teacher development and institutional culture	Changes depend on infrastructure, leadership and training time.	Develop teaching capacities; institutional repositories; clear digital coexistence policies; data protection.	Sequiros Bruna et al. (2016)
4. Possibilities and curricular-didactic impacts	Integrate transversal modules of information and data literacy; projects with audiovisual narrative; learning analytics and feedback services.	Align youth languages with academic rigor; design high-level cognitive tasks; critical reading; responsible use of analytics for timely feedback.	Cortés Quesada et al. (2023); Acosta Silva (2022)

Source: Own elaboration

In practice, the main challenge with screenagers is transforming consumption habits into study and creative practices. Didactic planning should alternate short high-activation segments with elaboration activities such as guided writing, Socratic discussion and extensive readings

structured by key questions, making the curriculum sustainable without simplifying it (Cortés et al., 2023). Audiovisual production must be evaluated as academic work through multimodal criteria including argument structure, evidence, source traceability,

licensing and accessibility, while maintaining rigorous citation (Acosta, 2022). At the same time, digital ethics education should address data management, care practices and public authorship to develop informed student agency (Sequeiros et al., 2016; Acosta, 2022).

Evidence shows a massive shift toward streaming and micro-content: it encourages creativity and informal learning but pressures deep reading and cognitive processing, supporting microlearning combined with high-level conceptual tasks (Cortés et al., 2023). The digital culture perspective questions the idea of homogeneous "digital natives" and highlights inequalities and mediations shaping technology use (Sequeiros et al., 2016). Research also indicates that academic digital competence does not arise automatically from exposure to screens; without information literacy and authorship training, schools risk confusing technical fluency with epistemic rigor (Acosta, 2022). From this derive educational actions: integrate information and data literacy across the curriculum, promote multimodal production with clear citations, use microcontent to trigger analytical tasks, prioritize formative feedback supported by analytics, and strengthen teacher development alongside coexistence and data protection policies. Future research should include experimental and longitudinal studies and evaluate concrete pedagogical interventions in screenager contexts.

Conclusions

Screenagers do not constitute a homogeneous generation of digital experts, nor can they be understood from the simplistic label of "digital natives" alone. Rather, they are socialized subjects in intensive medical-technology environments, whose daily experience is crossed by platforms, algorithms and dynamics of accelerated information consumption. This condition does not necessarily imply critical mastery or advanced skills; on the contrary, it shows a tension between instrumental familiarity and cognitive depth. Expanded access to content, networks, and production tools opens up unprecedented opportunities for expression, participation, and community building, but also exposes structural risks such as cognitive fragmentation, information overload, the misinformation and commodification of personal data. In this scenario, the school cannot simply incorporate devices or platforms as a gesture of superficial modernization. Mere technological presence does not guarantee pedagogical innovation or the development of critical thinking. The educational response requires a deeper transformation: designing didactic mediations that articulate youth languages - audiovisual, multimodal, interactive - with rigorous epistemic standards. This implies explicitly curricular the information, media and data literacy, integrating it transversely in the different areas of knowledge. To evaluate multimodal production with the same conceptual and argumentative requirement as traditional writing involves recognizing that knowledge can be expressed in multiple formats, provided that it maintains coherence, substantiation, and academic ethics. Likewise, school culture must assume that digital transformation is not only a student challenge, but also an academic and institutional one. It is essential to provide systematic time and space for professional teacher learning, strengthening pedagogical, technological and ethical skills. Continuing education should not focus exclusively on the instrumental use of tools, but on a critical understanding of digital environments, their algorithmic logics and their socio-political implications. Likewise, educational institutions need clear regulatory frameworks on data protection, privacy, and

responsible digital citizenship, ensuring safe environments for students and teachers.

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