

## Chapter 9

# Rethinking E-Learning and Digital Natives

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### ABSTRACT

*Prensky calls the generation which was born after the 1980s and into this culture the digital natives, and he calls the generation which was born before the 1980s the digital immigrants. Digital natives are the ones who were born into technological development, grew up with technology, were educated with technology, and use technology very much. However, Prensky's differentiation has been criticized for being strict and his attitude has been criticized for being technology lover. Prensky accepts the intensive interest of the children towards technology and that's why he claims that they learn from technology. With this point of view, a critical perspective will be shown towards Prensky's digital immigrant and digital native terms, and e-learning of the children in this digital culture will be observed in this study. For this purpose, related approaches and studies have been scanned.*

### INTRODUCTION

Technology transforms our lives dramatically and creates its own culture. Now everything, from language and socializing style, changes and this change is renewed so quickly. When technological studies are observed, it can be seen that the most seen point is that the writers are under the influence of the glamour and headiness of frequently used technology. The techno-psycho attitude of the people against constantly and quickly renewed culture and transformation, and the culture in which the new generation will grow up have to be studied.

Today the technological development is constant and new technologies transform our lives. Technological developments are evolutionary qualified and because irrevocable important changes are necessary new revolutionary innovations come together. The invention of computer technologies and digitality has underlain these developments. The improvement in computer technologies led some important developments in computer area in 1980s; after the internet entered our lives in 1990s, social media was born in

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2000s and unthinkable new changes especially in communication came. The new generation grows up with the technology and a brand new generation is formed. Because fast developments in technology have affected the culture, the difference between the generations has become huge.

Marc Prensky calls the generation which was born grew up after 1980 the digital natives. Digital natives use technology fast and practically, they adapt the innovations and they prefer technology while doing something. The digital immigrants who were born before 1980 don't usually prefer technology, they usually use traditional communication ways, they adapt the changes fast and they don't use technology practically. These terms, which Prensky introduced, have been criticized because of the strict differentiation by a lot of authors. This is because of the fact that there can be some people who are digital native and don't prefer using technology; and there can be some people who are digital immigrant and prefer using technology. For this reason differentiation has to be discussed. Also the children are born into technology now and they take their place as digital natives in the literature necessarily. Because technology is used in education, new generation's socializing style is via technology and the young people build their identity with the help of social media; the usage of technology has become compulsory. On the other hand, Prensky has answered these criticisms. Because Prensky's field is about education, Prensky has mainly focused on learning of the new generations via technology (see 2001a, 2001b, 2001c, 2001d, 2003a, 2003b, 2004, 2006, 2009, 2010, 2011a, 2011b, 2012, 2016). According to Prensky new generations learn and use a digital language like their mother tongue and they learn this language with technology. Prensky has especially dealt with computer games about this topic. Within the scope of these arguments, firstly Prensky's digital native and digital immigrant terms have been mentioned and then generation topic has been mentioned and finally the arguments about e-learning has been studied by.

## **PRENSKY AND E-LEARNING**

Today there are lots of approaches and studies on ICT. The most approached categories in the studies are children and the young ones. Rapetti (2011) discussed how ICT approaches to students in three categories. These are the enthusiasts, the reactionaries and the critics. Some approach this much-discussed subject with enthusiasm, some approach with reactionary and some approach with criticism. Mostly the enthusiastic ones can be shown. A lot of writers welcome the new generations with technology (see Seufert, 2007; Palloff & Pratt, 2003; Howe & Strauss, 2000; Tapscott, 1998, 2009; Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005).

Learning expresses a very wide term which includes family, school, geography, country and cultural structures. Because technological improvements change cultural structures, learning styles are also affected. The researchers who assume technology positively say that learning of the children is almost completely via digital culture. One of the first people that comes to mind is Prensky because of his studies about digital culture and learning on education. However there are some topics which this writer ignored. This doesn't mean that digital learning isn't real even if this writer is being criticized. Of course new technologies not only give technological education but also they help new policies to occur.

Because most of Prensky's studies are about education, he mostly dealt with the education of the new generation. Because the new generation started to be educated by technology based system, Prensky has remarked to this field. But of course a lot has changed since the time Prensky started to write about this subject in 2001. At those times computers weren't as common and handy as today. For this reason the arguments of Prensky is being criticized intensely even today. Prensky claims that children learn with digital media.

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