

Running Head: Digital Literacy

## **Digital Literacy: A Twenty-first Century Imperative**

**Ms. Hanifa Rahman**

Assistant Professor

Dept. of English

D.H.S.K College, Dibrugarh, Assam



## **Introduction**

Digital literacy is now the top concern in the era of contemporary digital education due to the digital revolution and the rapid development in ICT. As a result, a large number of educational institutions have changed their curricula, and many more are expected to do the same. It is crucial that teachers adhere to a schedule of ongoing training in order to make changes in the classroom that are long-lasting and effective. Since teachers play a crucial role in education, it is imperative that they develop their knowledge and abilities in order to become digitally literate and implement new teaching strategies.

Thus, in this context, the paper attempts a detailed analysis of the idea of digital literacy, its significance in modern education, and the difficulties faced by contemporary teachers in this field. In doing so, it takes into account the difficulties of teaching in the present age of technology, where instructors must learn new digital abilities and use new teaching approaches to meet the standards of digitally advanced students.

### **Digital Literacy Concept:**

Reading and writing abilities are known as literacy. In today's world however, literacy goes beyond the ability to comprehend text. The new skill that has become an imperative in the 21<sup>st</sup> century world is digital literacy. Although "digital" is a broad subject, in simpler terms it refers to current digital technologies. According to Sen (2017), Cornell University defines digital literacy as the capacity of a person to use information technology and the internet to search, assess, use, share, and create material. Information and communications technology (ICT) advancements in recent years have changed how people study. Both in the educational system and at home, ICT has grown to play a significant part in the learning process (Meyers et al., 2013, Argentin, et al., 2014). Particularly the Internet has made an almost limitless amount of knowledge sources accessible to everyone. As a result, the capacity to access, identify, extract, judge, organize, and display digital information is becoming increasingly necessary for the learning process (Argentin, et. al., 2014).

Understanding digital media is a key component of digital literacy. This happens as a result of meaningful and sustained patterns of consumption and curation that increase a person's capacity to contribute to a real community. This includes the capacity to evaluate, order, and respond to the vast amounts of digital material that 21st-century individuals are exposed to on a daily basis. In actuality, computer literacy differs from digital literacy. It involves the ability to think critically, understanding of the essential norms of conduct that are required in online settings, as well as knowledge of the common societal problems brought on by digital technology. Alternative definition: digital literacy is the combination of tool knowledge, critical thought, and social involvement. Digital literacy is the capacity to utilize information

and communication technologies to locate, analyze, produce, and transmit information, needing both cognitive and technical abilities. A person who is digitally literate should be able to use computer networks, participate in online communities, and comprehend the societal concerns created by digital technology. Thus, living, learning, and working in a digital society is what digital literacy entails.

## Digital Literacy and the role of Teachers:

The term "digital literacy" refers to a broad variety of abilities, all of which are crucial for success in the increasingly digital world. Currently, it is crucial to the teaching and learning process. Teachers are increasingly expected to use digital resources as teaching aids while instructing pupils. Paul Glistter introduced the phrase "digital literacy" in 1997. He explained it as "Literacy of the Digital Age." Similarly, Sen's (2017) study found that the ideas of digital literacy are a set of skills necessary for full participation in a knowledge society. For the purposes of communication, expression, cooperation, and advocacy, it encompasses gadgets like cellphones, tablets, laptops, and desktop PCs. Although these criteria indicate a distinction between knowledge and skill, it is more difficult to identify it in real practice, especially in a school environment. Teachers are supported by digital technology to expand the curriculum and improve pedagogical strategies in 21st-century classrooms.

It is the duty of the digitally literate teacher to advise the students on whether sources are reliable, up-to-date, or linked to other helpful websites about the topic. More significantly, the teacher must help the students determine whether the material is provided objectively or biasedly. The instructor should urge pupils to have a thorough understanding of the programme since it is important. To assist their pupils become responsible digital citizens, today's instructors must arm themselves with the required digital abilities.

### 1. Effective use of search engines such as "Google"

- It is the digitally literate teacher's responsibility to guide the students regarding which sources are authentic and which are updated regularly or whether there are other useful sites linked to the subject and, more importantly, if the piece of information is written in biased language or objective. The teacher should encourage students to have an all-round knowledge of the software, which is relevant.

### 2. Educating students to be responsible digital citizens

- Responsible users are also necessary for the virtual world to flourish healthily. He or she may mentor and inspire their pupils to be ethical online users. Academic plagiarism and cyberbullying are often the two main problems that arise in cases of education-related internet usage.

- The instructor has to address plagiarism and provide clear guidelines.

Cyberbullying is a common aberrant behaviour that is seen in students. In the twenty-first century, bullying is a significant problem in educational settings like schools. Students who engage in such behaviour should be discouraged, and those who are bullied need to get

appropriate treatment.

### 3. Reducing the digital divide

- Due to the large population in our expanding nation, there is social and economic inequality. Therefore, a significant portion of potential learners are not being reached by the advancement of technology, which is working as a blessing for a fortunate few. A teacher who is computer proficient may promote the cause and work with the government to find a solution to such a fundamental issue.

### 4. Promoting responsible use of digital media

- Students are quite good at using different applications and websites. However, people frequently are unable to comprehend the app's potential. It is the duty of the instructor to guide pupils in making good use of their digital literacy.

### 5. Positive student discrimination and selecting the best app or instructional tool

- A digitally literate teacher may use the many applications and resources at their disposal to deliver more thorough instruction. Digitally literate teachers are familiar with their students and can coherently explain the benefits and drawbacks of adopting a certain tool in situations when the administration of the school requires the use of unrelated applications or culturally unique programmes in the classroom.

### 6. Advances in technology

- Teachers who are adept with technology can offer vital advice to those who create educational technology on pedagogical approaches or particular subjects. This improves both the amount and quality of information that may be used for instructional purposes.

## **Tools for Fostering Digital Literacy in Students:**

- **Understanding:** the capacity to glean concepts from media, both implicit and explicit.
- **Interdependence:** Whether conceivably, symbolically, ideally, or literally, one media type is connected to another.
- **Social Factors:** The effectiveness of an organic ecosystem for sourcing, storing, and repackaging media is determined on the sharing of memes, messages, and ideas through specialised platforms.
- **Curation:** Recognizing the importance of information, reorganising and effectively managing data to prevent information overload or digital hoarding, and enhancing the quality of excellent information.
- **Media literacy** entails critical reading and writing in a variety of media for academic and

professional purposes.

- Information literacy- Find, analyse, and share information are all aspects of information literacy.
- Digital scholarship is the development of methods that rely on technology.
- Communication and cooperation skills — using digital networks for both learning and research.
- Learning skills — studying in formal and informal technological environments.

### **Difficulties and Challenges:**

The issue of digital literacy for students has put special demands on teachers. A digitally literate teacher is expected to have the ability to:

- choose which digital tools are appropriate for their course content and be able to present their course online.
- Determine which digital tools and work methods support, develop, or increase the quality of their course.
- recognise the advantages of various digital examinations so they can select the best form of examination in accordance with the objectives and guidelines.
- By using the digital tools and techniques they have selected, explain and emphasise for the students the difficulties around teaching and learning.

There are more studies being done on how instructors deal with difficulties, how their level of digital literacy may be raised, and other daily developments in education when technology is used as extra teaching material. For instance, Srivastava and Dey (2018) looked into the difficulties that teachers face when implementing digital tools in their lessons. The results showed that these difficulties include a lack of technical support, resources, and time, as well as an average level of teacher perceptions of the benefits of using digital tools in teaching and learning. Similar to this, Garcia-Perez, Rebollo-Catalan, and Garcia-Perez (2016) found that while using digital tools and social networks, many general education instructors had a moderate degree of digital literacy. However, it's intriguing that in regular teaching practice, it was discovered that they had far less developed digital literacy. In their study and research with teachers, Rokenes and Krumsvik (2016) came to the conclusion that reflection, attitudes, acceptance of new teaching techniques, and collaborative learning are all necessary for instructors to increase their digital literacy. Last but not least, taking into consideration the findings of the study on teachers' digital literacy, Ata and Yildirim (2019) recommended that digital literacy courses be included in all teacher education programmes, along with more practical activities helpful for developing teachers' digital literacy. encourage the next generation of digital citizens to be mindful and innovative content consumers.

In the Indian context, where there is a significant gap in economic situations, the digital divide

education, there are not enough computer teachers in rural regions. Since many youngsters now is a serious worry. Although some attempts have been made to provide instructors with digital have access to digital media, they frequently use it to study without receiving official education. It is very likely to be distracted and misled in such a situation. Therefore, appropriate digital safety precautions must be performed. And this can be taught only by teachers. However, despite the fact that we still have ways to go, we must not lose sight of our successes and consider the bigger picture. Information technology has been added as a significant topic in our newly revised educational system. Many underfunded schools now have computers to help our rural people become digitally literate. Our attention should be on ensuring that our instructors are digitally literate in order to move this growth ahead.

## **Conclusion**

Online education delivery is nothing new. Since roughly ten years ago, the emphasis has been on the digitization of all industries since the world changes quickly. In light of the discovered information, the education sector was likewise modernized, which has been beneficial to many. This is how all schools must operate, and NCERT has now unveiled a digital safety curriculum for classrooms. Our digitally savvy teachers will soon be paving the road for an educated India that possesses a thorough understanding of digital etiquette and is comprised of responsible online citizens. India still needs to upgrade its current infrastructure, though. We must maintain our optimism and support for one another since we are all citizens of this magnificent country. A clever combination of online and offline instruction can aid in closing the digital divide. Mobile-based learning can assist in functioning as a tool to offer digital literacy in light of the increased use of smartphones by all demographic groups. Furthermore, today's kids are aware that having a working knowledge of technology improves their chances of landing a job. In the fields of ICT, InfoTech, Software, and Computing Services, there has been rapid expansion in employment, signings, and educational institutions. Government and businesses are making significant investments in these fields to advance programming, artificial intelligence, and digitalization. systems for communications, exchange, data tracking, identity, and papers. Former United Nations Secretary-General and Nobel winner Kofi Annan famously said, "Literacy is a bridge from despair to hope. It is a device for modern society's everyday existence. It is a defence against poverty and a cornerstone of growth. The path to human development and the method by which every man, woman, and child can reach their full potential are both literacy (9)." This is true for both traditional literacy and digital literacy. The world of technology is here to stay. Whether or not we expose and educate our students for technology, they will still have to deal with the difficulties and dangers that come with using it. Consequently thus, it is crucial to educate children the abilities they require to survive and prosper.

## References:

- Amin, J. N. (2016). Redefining the Role of Teachers in the Digital Era. *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*, .3.3, pp. 40-45.
- Annan. Kofi (2017). Digital competence: the vital 21st-century skill for teachers and students. <https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/en/pub/resources/tutorials/digital-competence-the-vital-.htm>
- Argentin, G., Gui, M., Pagani, L. & Stanca, L. (2014) The Impact of Digital Literacy on Educational Outcomes: Evidence from Performance Tests. <http://www.aiel.it/Old/bacheca/Pisa/papers/pagani.pdf>
- Ata, R., Yildirim, K. (2019), Exploring Turkish Pre-Service Teachers' Perceptions and Views of Digital Literacy, *Education Sciences*, 9,40.
- Garcia-Perez, R., Rebollo-Catalan, A., Garcia-Perez, C. (2016). The relationship between teacher training preferences and their digital skills on social networks. *BORDON-REVISTA DE PEDAGOGIA*, 68(2), 137-153.
- Paul Glister (1997), *Digital Literacy*, John Wiley & Sons.
- Payton, S., Hague, C. (2010) 'Digital literacy in practice: case studies of primary and secondary classrooms', *Future lab*, Retrieved July 27, 2020 from [http://www2.futurelab.org.uk/resources/documents/project\\_reports/digital\\_literacy\\_case\\_studies.pdf](http://www2.futurelab.org.uk/resources/documents/project_reports/digital_literacy_case_studies.pdf)
- Rakenes, F.M., Krumsvik, R.J.(2016).Prepared to teach ESL with ICT? A study of digital competence in Norwegian teacher education. *Computers & Education*, 97, 1- 20.
- Sen, Enes. (2017) *Teacher Perceptions of Digital Literacy in an L2 Classroom*. [Thesis project with specialization on English Studies in Education]. Cornell University.
- Srivastava, K., Deyb, S. (2018). Role of Digital Technology in Teaching- Learning Process, *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR- JHSS)*, vol. 23, 1,74-79.



