NEP 2020 and Digital Literacy

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Abstract:

The current era is characterized by a significant emphasis on Information and Technology (IT). The Internet has effectively transformed the world into a global community, leading to the designation of today's learners as the "e-generation." Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools are widely utilized by individuals, particularly students, to foster relationships, connect globally, share and acquire knowledge, engage in discussions regardless of distance, develop stronger identities, and enhance their social interactions. This environment provides them with opportunities to connect, create, and collaborate with peers. Furthermore, students' engagement with ICT has improved their communication skills, expanded their social networks, and enhanced their technical competencies. The importance of ICT in education has been underscored in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. To promote ICT integration in education, the Indian government has initiated various programs, such as the Digital India campaign, e-pathshala, NROER, Swayam, Swayamprava, and NDL India. Digital literacy equips students to effectively navigate, critically assess, and ethically interact with digital technologies. The NEP 2020 advocates for the use of technology to improve access to quality education, refine teaching methodologies, and support personalized learning experiences. By fostering digital literacy, the policy aims to empower students to become engaged learners, critical thinkers, and innovative problem solvers. The swift evolution of technology and digital communication continuously influences learners in both formal and informal educational contexts. As these factors affect students' success in the 21st century, educators must acknowledge the benefits and challenges associated with digital literacy for secondary students. A socio-technological society shapes the relevance of digital literacy in teaching the dramatic arts. Digital literacy encompasses a range of complex cognitive, motor, social, and emotional skills, manifesting in both informal learning environments and modern educational settings.

Keywords: *Digital literacy skills, Communication and NEP-2020*

Introduction:

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted India's educational landscape significantly. To adapt, schools and universities have embraced remote learning methods, offering online lectures and assessments. This shift has led to a major transformation in the education system, with digital learning emerging as the most accessible alternative. However, this sudden transition and reliance on technology have brought about several challenges. Amid these changes, the Ministry of Education introduced the New Education Policy (NEP) on July 29, 2020, after 34 years. The policy includes measures to enhance digital learning and address infrastructural gaps. According to Kamala (2020), the NEP aims to ensure equitable access to quality education for all students,
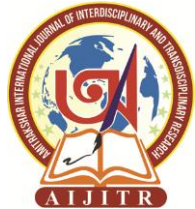
particularly those from marginalized, disadvantaged, and underrepresented communities. India's socioeconomic and regional diversity presents challenges to the adoption and accessibility of online learning. To address these issues, NIOS hosted a webinar to promote technology integration in education and overcome language barriers. Furthermore, the National Digital Educational Architecture (NDEAR) adopts a digital-first approach to support teaching and learning effectively.

The National Digital Educational Architecture (NDEAR) is a key component of the Indian government's Digital India initiative, designed to simplify processes for students, parents, teachers, and administrators. In today's global socio-technical environment, which heavily incorporates media technologies, digital communication, and multimodal interaction, it is essential for learners to develop the skills to effectively use technological tools while understanding when and how to use them appropriately. Gilster (1997) defines digital literacy as the "ability to comprehend and utilize information in various formats from diverse sources, particularly when accessed through computers." According to Gilster (1997), the Internet plays a pivotal role in modern education by helping integrate students into a socio-technological society. Kaur (2020) highlights in her study that educational institutions worldwide are leveraging specialized resources to develop online learning materials for students across various academic disciplines. With rapid advancements in digital communication and the growing importance of digital literacy, reading and writing tools are now integrated with complex multimedia elements such as music and images. As digital technologies increasingly shape communication in society, it has become essential for students to master multiple digital literacies and technologies. Consequently, educators must adjust their teaching methods to account for informal learning environments and provide clear guidance on the evolving reading and writing processes influenced by digital communication technologies.

Teachers in primary and secondary schools need to develop relevant assessment methods that account for recent technological advancements and the resulting changes in communication channels. According to a study by Pandey and Pandey (2020), the use of ICT positively impacts teaching and learning. Additionally, it has been noted that ICT usage in developing countries like India is relatively lower compared to developed countries. Pavel and Fruth (2014) found that e-learning can enhance the quality of higher education by introducing innovative teaching methods and by boosting students' motivation, interest, and engagement, thereby helping them acquire digital literacy skills. Reading technology skills are crucial for adapting to the digital society, but broader abilities and competencies are needed for digital age literacy. With digitization significantly impacting education, educators and institutions are discussing how best to equip students for this era. Digital literacy encompasses the ability to find, create, consume, assess, and share content via the Internet and other informational mediums. It involves recognizing, utilizing, and accessing digital tools and resources, as well as managing, integrating, assessing, and analyzing them to create new media and information. Living effectively in the digital world requires wise internet use, ethical behavior, talent acquisition, awareness of risks and dangers, and protection against potential threats. Digital literacy training can help in implementing these practices. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been advocating for the youth and businesses to continuously focus on skilling, reskilling, and up skilling in anticipation of upcoming changes. The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, the Ministry of Education, and other industry stakeholders need to collaborate to improve young people's access to skills and employment opportunities. If everything goes as planned, our nation could generate 2.3 million jobs by 2030, coming close to the United States' 2.7 million jobs. He emphasized the importance of creating educational content that aligns with industry needs, a goal that can be achieved by providing students with the necessary practical training.

Components of Digital Literacy:

- **Technical Skills**: The ability to use digital devices, software, and applications effectively. This includes basic skills such as typing, using productivity tools, and navigating digital interfaces.

- **Information Literacy**: The ability to find, evaluate, and use information from digital sources. Students learn to identify credible sources, analyze data, and synthesize information to create meaningful content.
- **Media Literacy**: Understanding how digital media influences perceptions and behaviours. Students learn to critically evaluate media messages and recognize biases and misinformation.
- **Communication Skills**: The ability to communicate and collaborate effectively using digital tools. This includes writing emails, participating in online discussions, and using social media responsibly.
- **Digital Citizenship**: Understanding the ethical and responsible use of technology. Students learn about online safety, privacy, and the importance of respecting others in digital environments.

NEP 2020 and Digital Literacy:

➢ The NEP 2020 in India highlights the vital role of digital literacy within the education system. It emphasizes the necessity for students to develop digital skills to thrive in the digital era. Key aspects of digital literacy as outlined in NEP 2020 include the integration of technology.

➢ NEP 2020 underscores the importance of incorporating technology into teaching and learning. It advocates for the use of digital tools, online resources, and multimedia content to improve educational quality. This integration helps students develop digital literacy skills through hands-on experience.

➢ NEP 2020 underscores the importance of equipping all students with foundational digital literacy. It acknowledges the necessity for students to possess basic digital skills, including computer usage, internet access, digital interface navigation, and productivity tool utilization. These skills are crucial for students to effectively interact with digital content and resources.

➢ NEP 2020 stresses the importance of developing and enhancing digital infrastructure in schools and educational institutions. It ensures that schools have access to reliable internet connectivity, computers, and other essential digital devices. A strong digital infrastructure is vital for fostering digital literacy and facilitating seamless technology integration in education.

➢ NEP 2020 highlights the necessity for comprehensive teacher training programs to improve educators' digital literacy skills. It acknowledges the pivotal role teachers play in facilitating students' digital learning experiences. Teachers need to possess the required knowledge and skills to effectively utilize digital tools, implement technology-integrated teaching methods, and guide students in developing digital literacy skills.

➢ NEP 2020 stresses the importance of embedding digital literacy skills throughout the curriculum. It advocates for incorporating digital skills into various subjects, allowing students to utilize digital tools and techniques in diverse contexts. The curriculum should foster critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, and creativity through digital methods.

➢ NEP 2020 highlights the use of open educational resources (OER) to foster digital literacy. OER includes freely accessible digital learning materials such as textbooks, videos, and interactive modules. By utilizing OER, students can access a wide range of high-quality resources to improve their digital literacy skills.

➢ NEP 2020 acknowledges the significance of digital security and ethics in the modern era. It stresses the inclusion of digital safety education in the curriculum to teach students about responsible digital behavior, privacy protection, cyber bullying prevention, and online security measures. Students should be informed about the ethical use of digital resources, including issues related to copyright and plagiarism.

➢ The primary aim of NEP 2020's focus on digital literacy is to equip students with the essential skills needed to excel in the digital age. Digital literacy empowers students to become proficient, critical thinkers and responsible users of technology. It prepares them for future academic, professional, and personal endeavours in a digital society.

Role of Digital Literacy in Education

In today's rapidly evolving digital world, digital literacy has become an essential skill for students. It goes beyond the basic ability to use a computer or browse the internet; it encompasses a range of competencies that enable individuals to navigate, evaluate, and create information using digital technologies. The integration of digital literacy in education is crucial for preparing students for the demands of the modern workforce and society.

Critical thinking and evaluation: Digital literacy fosters critical thinking skills by teaching students to assess the credibility, accuracy, and relevance of online information. They learn to analyse various sources, recognize biases, and develop a discerning mind-set. This helps students cultivate a questioning attitude and make informed judgments.

Access to information: Digital literacy enables students to utilize the vast array of information available online. They can search for resources, access educational materials, and explore various perspectives. This empowers students to become independent learners by providing them with the tools to find and evaluate information effectively.

Collaboration and communication: Digital literacy enhances collaboration and communication among students, teachers, and peers. It allows them to connect, share ideas, and work together on projects through digital platforms, online discussions, and collaborative tools. Digital literacy promotes effective communication skills, including online etiquette, respectful discourse, and active participation.

Creativity and innovation: Digital literacy equips students with tools and platforms for creative expression and innovation. They can produce content, design projects, and present their ideas using multimedia resources, digital tools, and software applications. Digital literacy inspires students to think outside the box, explore new possibilities, and express their creativity.

Personalized and differentiated learning: Digital literacy supports tailored and varied learning experiences. Students can access online resources that align with their interests, learning styles, and proficiency levels. They can engage in self-directed learning, delve into a wide range of topics, and utilize diverse educational materials. Digital literacy empowers educators to design personalized learning experiences and provide specific support to each student.

Personalized and differentiated learning: Digital literacy facilitates customized and diverse educational experiences. Students have the opportunity to explore online resources that correspond with their individual interests, preferred learning methods, and skill levels. This enables them to pursue self-directed learning, investigate a broad spectrum of subjects, and make use of various educational resources. Furthermore, digital literacy equips educators to create tailored learning experiences and offer targeted assistance to each student.

Career readiness: Proficiency in digital literacy is vital for achieving success in future careers. In the contemporary workforce, which is heavily influenced by technology, mastery of digital tools and technologies is imperative. Digital literacy provides students with essential skills in areas such as digital communication, data analysis, problem-solving, and adaptability, thereby equipping them to meet the challenges of the job market. This competence not only improves their employability but also empowers them to thrive in an ever-changing digital environment.

Digital literacy provides students with the essential knowledge and skills required to effectively navigate the digital landscape, engage in significant learning opportunities, and actively contribute to a technology-oriented society. This competency is a vital component of contemporary education, empowering students to attain success in their academic, professional, and personal endeavours.

We currently live in a world that is both enhanced and burdened by computers and gadgets, thanks to the growth in technology over the years. The dominance of technology in daily life emphasizes the need for digital literacy for both adults and children. The digital world is full of advantages and benefits for everyone, but it can also be overwhelming and even hazardous if technology is not used and understood correctly. For children to utilize technology safely and efficiently, they must be able to comprehend it. Learning how to update your Facebook status or take a picture is one of many aspects of digital literacy. Understanding and utilizing technology are both parts of digital literacy. Traditional literacy is a term we are all familiar with; reading and writing are both literacy components. However, more than being literate is required in the modern digital environment. Kids must learn digital literacy as well. Understanding and using technology are both components of digital literacy. It concerns the capacity to locate, utilize, and produce information online positively and helpfully. Digital literacy also entails being aware of the limitations of technology and the risks and safety measures associated with its use. Students must also be taught about cyber safety, "digital footprints," and about net etiquette (Osborne & Connely, 2015) [13]. There is still a great debate going on as to what extent digital literacy instruction will be integrated into traditional classroom instruction, and many studies have been conducted in an attempt to understand how to integrate both the methodologies in the best manner. (Kervin, Verenikina, Jones, & Beath, 2013; Henderson, 2011; Walsh, 2010; 2008) [5, 14, 15]

Advantages of Digital Literacy

In today's technology-driven world, digital literacy has become an essential skill for individuals of all ages. It encompasses the ability to effectively use digital tools and technologies to access, evaluate, create, and communicate information. The benefits of digital literacy are far-reaching and impact various aspects of life, from education and career readiness to personal development and civic participation.

Following are Some advantages of digital literacy given below:

1. Access to Information: Digital literacy facilitates individuals in obtaining and navigating the extensive array of information available online. It allows them to search for data, read articles, view videos, and engage with a variety of educational materials. This ability to access information fosters continuous learning and empowers individuals to broaden their understanding.

2. Communication and Collaboration: Digital literacy enhances communication and collaboration capabilities. Individuals can connect with others across the globe using social media, email, instant messaging, and video conferencing. This skill fosters teamwork on projects, the exchange of ideas, and networking possibilities, ultimately resulting in increased productivity and international relationships.

3. Employment Opportunities: In the current digital era, numerous professions necessitate proficiency in digital literacy. A comprehensive grasp of digital tools, software applications, and online platforms can significantly improve job prospects. Digital literacy empowers individuals to adjust to evolving market requirements, learn new skills, and maintain a competitive edge.

4. Creativity and Innovation: Digital literacy enables individuals to harness their creativity and explore innovative concepts. By utilizing a range of digital tools, people can generate content, including writing blogs,

creating videos, designing graphics, and programming software. This skill set cultivates a setting where creativity and innovation can flourish.

5. Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving: Digital literacy fosters critical thinking abilities as individuals engage with information on the internet. It equips them to assess the trustworthiness and accuracy of various sources, analyze data effectively, and recognize biases or false information. Furthermore, digital literacy empowers individuals to address challenges using technology, whether by resolving software problems or seeking assistance through online forums and communities.

6. Civic Engagement: Digital literacy plays a crucial role in fostering democratic participation and civic involvement. It empowers individuals to remain updated on current affairs, engage in online dialogues, and address political and social matters. By utilizing digital platforms, individuals can express their views, advocate for causes, and play an active role in driving positive change.

7. Efficiency and Organization: Digital literacy enables individuals to optimize both their personal and professional lives. It allows them to effectively manage their calendars, develop task lists, digitally store and organize documents, and leverage productivity tools such as project management applications or cloud storage solutions. These digital competencies significantly improve efficiency, time management, and organizational skills.

8. Access to Services: Digital literacy provides access to various online services, such as e-commerce, banking, healthcare, and government services. People can shop online, conduct financial transactions, access medical information, and interact with government agencies conveniently. This accessibility improves convenience and simplifies daily tasks.

Conclusion:

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in India has highlighted the significance of digital literacy within the educational framework. It acknowledges that digital literacy transcends mere technical proficiency, serving as a vital element of learning in the 21st century. A crucial advancement in preparing students to navigate the complexities of the digital landscape is the incorporation of digital literacy skills into the NEP 2020 framework. By understanding the transformative role of technology in education, the NEP 2020 underscores the necessity of developing digital literacy as an essential competency for learners across all age groups. These skills are in harmony with the NEP 2020's goal of fostering well-rounded individuals. Through the use of technology, students can access a variety of knowledge sources, collaborate with their peers, and participate in hands-on learning experiences. Furthermore, digital literacy aids in the development of essential 21st-century skills, including communication, creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration, which are crucial for success in a digital and interconnected environment. The integration of digital literacy in education aligns with the policy's aims of promoting equity and inclusion. The NEP 2020 seeks to ensure that every student, regardless of their socioeconomic status, has equal access to quality education by addressing the digital divide. By empowering students to utilize digital tools and resources, regardless of their location or financial situation, digital literacy fosters inclusivity and helps to mitigate educational inequalities. The emphasis on digital literacy within the NEP 2020 reflects its transformative potential in education, recognizing the importance of equipping learners with the skills needed to succeed in a technology-driven world.

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