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Digital Citizenship: Empowering Digital Citizens

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Abstract

In the information age, technological advancements have significantly transformed individual lifestyles and opportunities. Notably, the internet has rapidly permeated daily life, impacting areas such as education, communication, health, politics, industry, and media. People now share emotions and ideas online, exchange information, and stay informed about global events in real time. With the recent influx of digital tools into everyday life, both in educational settings and at home, their use has become essential. This extensive daily use underscores the importance of preparing individuals to communicate and collaborate online safely and responsibly, leading to the concept of digital citizenship. This study introduces the concept of digital citizenship, examines its educational methods, and offers recommendations for integrating digital citizenship education.

Keywords: Digital Citizens, Digital Citizenship, Elements of Digital Citizenship

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is a human right and is a Moral and Societal obligation. Education was evolved and formalised in the 17th century. It plays a vital role in eradicating poverty and bringing social change.

To end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that everyone enjoy peace and prosperity, in September 2015, the United Nations General Assembly approved the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which included 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The principle adopted was “leaving no one behind”. Of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, Goal 4, focuses on providing quality education and to shape peaceful and sustainable societies.

To build human capital for economic growth and create global citizens, education needs to be repurposed and redesigned. Global citizens are lifelong learners and education needs to instil in them the interconnectedness and dignity and create values of acceptance, equality, respect for diversity, empathy and compassion. Education-based on this approach will nurture the potential of the present and the future generations to generate peaceable and sustainable societies with a far-reaching vision of Sustainable Development Goal 4.

According to Statista Research Department, 90 per cent of the world’s population had completed a primary education and 66 per cent had attained secondary education. Whereas less than 40 per cent of the global population has attained tertiary education.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis has worsened the Inequalities in education, nearly 682 million students globally lived in with closed schools. Around 1.5 billion students and 630 million teachers have [been affected by the pandemic](#) and 23.8 million students worldwide are at risk of [not returning to educational institutions](#) particularly in tertiary education.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought a shift through digitalization. Technology and digital education are essential for achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 of inclusive and equitable quality education for all. The internet has become a much more sensible way of delivering information without boundaries. Technology support students around the world learn online.

Digital Citizens

Are using modern digital technology and spending over 20 hours a week online by communicating with unknown people, share content and stories to wide audiences and access information, news, and media on demand. They are effortlessly merging digital skills, knowledge and attitudes in order to actively participate and get connected with the society and become lifelong learners.

Challenges Faced by Digital Citizens

- Redundant Information.
- Inappropriate sites.
- Cyber Bullying.
- Vulnerabilities of websites

- Digital Illiteracy.
- Digital Fraud

Strategy for Coping Digital Challenges

It is essential to assess online tools' reliability and legitimacy and be well-informed about the innumerable issues that come with the incredible benefits of technology, but it is difficult because of the shortcomings of electronic media. There are numerous and various dangers of technology. Internet is a dangerous place when it comes to cyber security threats personal data, wealth, and identity or the dissemination of information or illegal materials. The concept of digital citizenship comes into existence to the make the digital citizens know their roles, responsibilities, and skills for navigating digital life. Digital citizenship is an evolving concept which addresses ways to protect one's self online.

Digital Citizenship

Karen Mossberger, Caroline Tolbert and Ramona McNeal has coined the term digital citizenship in 2007. Digital citizenship is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon extends the citizenship concept to both online and offline life in regard to confident and positive engagement with abilities, thinking, and action taking regarding safe and responsible access to digital technologies that provides equal opportunities for online participation, digital democracy, human rights, social justice, and technological skill. It allows people to understand, direct, engage in and transform self, Community, Society and the World. Digital citizenship

education shall provide an understanding about Digital literacy, Cyber Security, Privacy and Security, Collaboration, Copyright, Digital Footprint, Digital Ethics, Critical Resistance, Participation, Engagement etc.

Requisites of Digital Citizenship

Skills

- Knowledge about digital, information and media.
- Being sceptical and assessing mindset.
- Maintaining originality by using and creating digital content in meaningful ways.
- Having meaningful and purposeful interactions with the team

Values

- Ethics to be followed by maintaining standards of behaviour.
- Have accountability for every action.
- Intellectual property rights, copy rights and other legal protections should be considerations.
- Security and privacy aspect should be followed by protecting self and others

Behaviour

- Personal reputation to be maintained by considering digital footprint by online activity.
- Physical health and emotional wellbeing should be of utmost importance.
- Provide equitable support to access digital technologies and the internet.
- Promote by giving active support to digital citizenship values

Components of Digital Citizenship

Deference

- **Access:** Digital citizenship starts with encouraging equal access and providing knowledge about digital rights.
- **Etiquette:** Digital etiquette should be taught to make people understand how to use technology safely online and prevent threats of data stealing and other vulnerabilities and to make appropriate conduct online.
- **Cyber Law:** Users should be educated with digital law to make them understand that stealing or damaging another's digital work or identity or property is a crime.

Edify

- **Communication:** Majority of the users communicate in the digital space through social media, instant messaging or other formats with unknown people. Users need to learn how to make appropriate decision from various options available for the them online. This can make them better at communicators in the digital space.

- **Knowledge:** Current learners are the shapers of the future of digital world and our society. So, it becomes mandatory for the users to be digitally fluent and able to use and understand the latest technology to safely and securely navigate the digital world.
- **E-Commerce:** As users should be aware of digital economy as they make more purchases online. This will help them to be effective online consumers.

Shield

- **Rights and Responsibilities:** Digital citizens must be well informed about their digital rights and responsibilities towards privacy, freedom of speech, etc. This understanding in this digital age is essential for becoming a good digital citizen and learn more about the changing uses of social media around the world and its consequences on relationships, politics and everyday life.
- **Safety and Security:** Digital citizens leave their digital footprints of their data. Teaching digital citizenship ensures learners about information being produced by them and how data being is being used, for good and for bad. People need to be aware of the outside forces that might cause harm to them digitally and should have knowledge to protect their digital information.
- **Health and Wellness:** Digital technology affects physical health issues such as stress syndrome, psychological issues such as internet addiction, relationships and society. Digital citizenship addresses the issues like time spent digitally, feeling of the users being online, physical and virtual safety etc.

Teaching Digital Citizenship

Blended Digital Teaching and Learning: Blended teaching and learning is the educational practice of combining digital learning tools with the traditional face to face classroom teaching to help the digital citizens use and master latest technology that is shaping the modern world through a structured and supervised way

Inclusion: Include the digital citizens and discuss what is right and wrong in practicing netiquette online, make them understand the consequences of their decisions they make online, how it leaves digital foot prints and a peer can track the digital footprint. Discuss how to lock the digital door using passwords and insist on creating highest strength passwords, ask the users of internet not to talk or discuss or share their personal informational with the strangers. Discuss about legal considerations and ecommerce, ask them to be fair and not to use any data for which copy right rules are not found. Promote empathy and critical thinking by discussing and creating awareness about freedom of speech digitally, cyberbullying and digital wellbeing and help the digital citizen to take responsibility for the way they behave online.

Video Techniques: To engage the digital citizens to learn digital citizenship, Videos offers never-ending opportunities. To make the users act responsibly online, ask them to create digital portfolio videos using a screen recorder or assign a video project by asking them to cite the references at the end of the video. This will help the users to avoid cut copy paste habits and cultivate the behavior of digging deeper for information and help them in creating original digital content in meaning ways

Case Studies: Examine Cyberbullying Stories that are already resolved depending on the age group and Find Solutions. This will help the digital citizens know how/why the events are cyberbullying occurred and how they would react if it happened to them. Ensure that they understand how to combat such situations to avoid the worst possible outcome.

II . CONCLUDING REMARKS

Society is trending towards more connectivity through digital means. Modern digital literacy has become an individual's right and a necessary condition for social and democratic growth of the society. Sustainable Development requires to adopt to the new technologies and embrace digital development without compromising and balancing the rights of privacy, dignity, freedom of thought and speech. To navigate digital lives safely and responsibly people are to be empowered to decide for themselves how to harness the power of data and digital technologies.

Digital citizens have obligation to society in terms of use of technology, ways of accessing the internet, social media network infrastructure, hardware and software equipment, and the use of technology as a communication device. For a better digital life in the modern world, teaching digital citizenship to digital citizens creates awareness and makes them understanding the underlying key elements.

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