DIGITAL LITERACY IN INDIA: AN OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT

This era is marked by huge innovation in every field and revolution in education is not exception. Technology has become integral part of every human's life. So, in this paper an attempt has been made to know the meaning and initiatives of digital literacy and the challenges and issues facing and what government actions should be in near future to make digital literacy a success in India.

Keywords: digital literacy, innovation, technology etc.

INTRODUCTION

The term "Digital literacy" was coined by Paul Gilster in 1997, in his book. Before this people talked more about the term called 'Computer literacy' in 1990's during the era of internet revolution. In the 21st Century where technology is ruling in every area, digital literacy is not just an optional skill but necessary skills from students to professionals where everyone are benefiting from it. As digital technology has become more common, affordable, portable to common people from all parts of the society. Today more and more people are started using online and digital participation. The concept "digital" started during the period when Rajiv Gandhi was Prime minister, who was trying to bring IT revolution in India. Today the concept digital has gained momentum in India after Prime minister Narendra Modi started using the concepts like Digital India, Digital literacy and make in India etc.,

OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of the paper are as follows:

1. To know the programmes initiated by Indian government.
2. To understand the digital literacy experiences in India.
3. To emphasis the need for improving digital literacy in India.

MEANING & ASPECTS OF DIGITAL LITERACY

Digital literacy simply refers 'how to use digital tools like computer, mobile, tabs, internet'. It also includes using digital platform safely and using different sources. Since it has became an important tool today it helps us to grow fast, improve fast, learn fast and be ready for future and to face future challenges.

Aspect of Digital literacy in India involves

a) Power of internet
b) Use of e-mails
c) Uses of apps
d) Uses of browsers
e) Uses of government apps
f) Uses of Unified payment interface (BHIM)

g) Critical thinking

h) Problem solving

i) Ethical online behavior

j) Digital citizenship

Government initiatives

1. National Digital literacy Mission (NDLM)

It is also known as DISHA (Digital Saksharta Abhiyan) was implemented in India between 2014 and 2016 to provide digital literacy including women. This initiative was part of Digital India programme launched in 2015. The purpose of NDLM is to impart IT training to non-literate citizen with the target of 52 lakhs people in first phase.

2. Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)

It was launched in 15th of July 2015; the schemes initial aim was to provide free short duration skill training to enhance the employability. This programme is currently in its 4.0 phase.

3. Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA)

It was launched in Feb 2017 by the government of India to provide digital literacy to rural household. Its purpose was to make 6 crore rural households digitally literate. Its goal was to train one person from every rural household.

Government initiatives in Karnataka

a) Gram Digi Vikasana:

A digital literacy program launched by the Chief Minister, in partnership with Dell Technologies and the Sikshana Foundation, to provide gram panchayats with better access to digital and internet services.

b) Karnataka Incubation Foundation (KIFDWD)

Offers training in basic computer and internet skills, digital platforms, mobile literacy and online safety for rural youth and women.

c) Vision Karnataka Foundation

It conducts a broader digital literacy program to provide basic dgital skills training to citizens, particularly in rural areas to help them participate in the digital economy.

d) Digital Literacy for Seniors

The Karnataka Mass Education Department is implementing a dedicated for senior citizens to educate then on digital tools and online transactions to help then navigate financial, communication and other digital platforms safely.

DIGITAL LITERACY: INDICATORS AND HIERARCHY

Government of recently released survey conducted in 2021 named "Multiple indicator survey" that provides a measure of digital literacy across states in India. The survey measures 9 indicators on digital literacy. Following the ITU (International telecommunication Union) classification, the 9 indicators are classified into three categories.

A) Basic skill

(i)   Send e-mails with attached files

(ii) Use copy & paste tools to duplicate or move information within a document

(iii) Copy or move a file or folder

(B) Intermediate skill

(i)   Transfer files between a computer and other devices

(ii)   Create electronic presentation with presentation software

(iii) Find, download, install & configure software

(iv)   Connect & install new devices

(v)   Use basic arithmetic formulae in a spreadsheet

(C) Advanced skill

(i)   Write a computer program using a specialized programming language.

Impact of Digital literacy

a) It has facilitated to services like e-health, e-governance, e-education, e-services.

b) It has empowered citizens to participate in Digital economy and to look for new job opportunities.

c) It has enhanced social connectivity, where it has allowed people to connect with family and friends online.

d) It has increased access to vast educational resources, online learning and information.

Digital literacy Trends

State government of Kerala launched Akshaya project with the aim to make one person in each household computer literate in the Mallapuram district, making Mallapuram the first e-literate district in India. By early 2025, India had 806 million internet users representing 53.3% penetration rate, though 44.7% of the population remained offline.

India's digital literacy very low compare to many other developing countries, however the trends have shown improvements as 39% of India's households are digitally literate. Urban areas around 61% are digital literate, rural areas around 26% digital literate. National sample survey (NSS) 78th round showed computer literacy rate of 24.7%. NSS indicates that, digital literacy is low for both men & women in India, with only 22% of all men 21% of all women above the age of 15 have digital literacy.

Gender gap in digital literacy is also high with basic digital literacy skill is 6.7%, 7.5% in intermediate skill 9.8% for advanced skill. National statistical Office (NSO) which did a survey January to March 2025 showed the following facts

Table no:1 Trends in digital literacy

	Rural areas (in %)	Urban areas (in %)
Mobile ownership	69%	82%
Internet access	83%	92%

The above table shows that the trends in digital literacy in India. The mobile ownership and internet access level of percentage is more in urban area with 82% and 92% as compare to rural areas like 69% and 83%.

KEY CHALLENGES

a) To reduce the digital divide between urban & rural areas and between rich & poor communities.

b) To fill the infrastructure gaps, so that people get internet connectivity in make use of online resources.

c) Giving internet data, computers which is now at higher cost to low-income household of an affordable price.

d) To improve skill and knowledge gap

e) To increase awareness among citizens

f) Reducing language barriers for non-English speaking population.

g) Giving more importance to cyber security and privacy concern.

CONCLUSION

Today in the 21st Century where with each passing day new innovation is taking place, Digital literacy may take huge leap in education sector in coming years. Inspite of government incentives and programmes to improve the digital literacy in India, due to lack of infrastructure facility and urban rural divide is making the target to be achieved a little harder than what was perceived. However, if these problems are addressed, India can easily overcome the challenges of digital literacy and with high mobile penetration in India it can easily empower its citizens to fully participate in this digital era and make digital literacy in India a great model to fallow.

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