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THE ROLE OF DIGITAL LITERACY IN SHAPING EDUCATION IN THE NEXT-NORMAL

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Abstract

The rapid adoption of digital technologies in education, spurred on by the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, has led to significant changes. This paper examines the critical role that digital literacy plays in reshaping education as we move toward the "normal," as it is known. This paper aims to explore the role of digital literacy in shaping education in the next-normal. The paper methodology integrates a comprehensive literature review from reputable sources like PubMed and Scopus, focusing on emerging themes to uncover insights into digital literacy's influence on pedagogy and student outcomes. The results found that; (1) Digital literacy for educational equity and inclusion; addressing the digital divide, ensuring access to digital learning opportunities, and promoting diversity and inclusion through digital literacy. (2) Digital literacy for 21st-century skills development; critical thinking and problem-solving, collaboration and communication, and creativity and innovation. And (3) digital literacy and educational policy; national and international initiatives, policy implications for curriculum development and teacher training, and future directions and recommendations. In conclusion, Digital literacy becomes the fundamental component of education in the next normal, encouraging creativity, fairness, and flexibility. Proficiency in digital literacy is imperative for both educators and students to effectively navigate the dynamic landscape of education. Education can fully utilize technology by fostering digital literacy, which will guarantee equal access and equip students to succeed in a world driven by technology.

Keywords: Digital Literacy, Shaping Education, Next-Normal

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Introduction

Following worldwide disturbances like the COVID-19 pandemic, education has experienced a substantial metamorphosis, leading academics and decision-makers to conceptualize the "next normal" in education (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2020). This paradigm shift includes a rethinking of education's future that more seamlessly incorporates digital technologies into teaching and learning practices, in addition to the immediate response to crisis-driven remote learning. There is a growing understanding that the next normal in education will be more dependent on digital tools and platforms to support blended, hybrid, and remote learning modalities as educational institutions struggle to maintain learning continuity while adjusting to changing circumstances (König et al., 2021). To successfully navigate the complexities of digital learning environments, this transition calls for a reevaluation of traditional pedagogical approaches as well as the development of digital literacy skills among educators and learners.

Digital literacy is the capacity to obtain, evaluate, comprehend, and produce digital information and media in an efficient, ethical, and responsible manner (Bawden, 2008; Martin et al., 2011). Among the many skills it encompasses are critical thinking, computer literacy, media literacy, and information literacy. According to Martin et al. (2011), these are all essential for surviving in the digital age. Digital literacy comprises the following skills: using digital tools for both professional and personal development; engaging in online communication and collaboration; and critically assessing the reliability and validity of information found online (Bawden, 2008). It goes beyond just knowing how to operate digital devices and software.

The importance of digital literacy in today's world cannot be overstated. In an increasingly digitalized world where information is easily accessible through online platforms and digital technologies permeate every aspect of daily life, digital literacy skills are essential for full participation in civic, social, economic, and educational spheres (Martin et al., 2011). For both teachers and students, digital literacy is crucial in the educational setting. Teachers need to be digitally literate to successfully incorporate technology into their lesson plans, design dynamic and captivating learning experiences, and assist students in developing their digital literacy (Belshaw, 2011). Martin et al. (2011) state that for students to use online resources, conduct research, evaluate information critically, collaborate with peers, and create digital content, they must be proficient in digital literacy. Through the ability to adapt to an ever-changing digital landscape, digital literacy equips individuals with the skills needed to thrive in the workforce of the twenty-first century and society at large. In addition, The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the significance of digital literacy, as societies across the globe have become more reliant on digital technologies for everyday communication, work, and education. To survive and prosper in today's digitally connected world, people need to possess digital literacy skills, which include the ability to use digital tools efficiently, assess online content critically, and adjust to rapidly evolving digital platforms. The pandemic has sped up the digital revolution in several industries, emphasizing how important it is for people to have strong digital literacy abilities to fully engage in the digital economy and society (Kaplan, 2020). Because of this, funding digital literacy education and training initiatives has become essential to ensuring that people—especially those from marginalized communities—have the skills they need to prosper in the post-pandemic world.

However, a clear correlation has been found in recent empirical research between students' and teachers' success in incorporating technology into the classroom and their level of digital literacy. According to Jones & Smith's (2020) study, for example, teachers who possessed higher levels of digital literacy were also better at incorporating technology into their lessons. The educators exhibited increased assurance in employing diverse digital tools and platforms to augment learning encounters, culminating in better student involvement and scholastic accomplishments. In a similar vein, students who demonstrated higher levels of digital literacy

were also more adept at adjusting to and navigating digital learning environments (Brown & Johnson, 2019). Their improved access to, assessment of, and use of digital resources resulted in improved learning outcomes and heightened motivation. The noteworthy influence of enhanced digital literacy on learning outcomes and student engagement in digital education contexts is further demonstrated by specific instances. For example, teachers with advanced proficiency in digital literacy can make use of interactive technologies and multimedia resources to design captivating and dynamic learning environments. To support deeper conceptual understanding and encourage active learning, they can integrate multimedia presentations, virtual laboratories, and digital simulations (Smith & Clark, 2018). Furthermore, students who possess advanced digital literacy abilities can work together more successfully in virtual settings by employing digital media creation tools, communication tools, and collaborative platforms to participate in group projects and project-based learning (Jones et al., 2021). All things considered, these illustrations show how critical digital literacy skills are to helping teachers and students realize the full potential of technology to improve instruction and learning.

This issue emphasizes how important it is for teachers and students to have a strong connection between digital literacy and effective technology integration in the classroom. Research continuously shows that proficient digital literacy abilities enable teachers to improve their methods and encourage student participation. They also help students collaborate more effectively and successfully navigate digital learning environments. These results highlight how important digital literacy is to maximizing technology's advantages for better teaching and learning results.

Literature Review

Foundations and Frameworks of Digital Literacy

1) Historical Evolution of Digital Literacy: Digital literacy's historical development can be traced to the advent of digital technologies and their assimilation into diverse facets of society. The majority of early ideas about digital literacy were centered on technical abilities connected to computer operation and programming. Yet, as digital technologies proliferated, the idea grew to include more diverse competencies than just technical know-how. For instance, Paul Gilster popularized the term "digital literacy" in the 1990s to refer to the capacity to comprehend and make effective use of information from digital sources (Gilster, 1997). This signaled a change to a more comprehensive definition of digital literacy that emphasized media literacy, information literacy, and critical thinking abilities.

2) Contemporary Definitions and Models: The many facets of digital literacy and its importance in navigating the intricacies of the digital age are reflected in modern definitions. To conceptualize digital literacy, scholars have put forth several models and frameworks, frequently highlighting the concept's interdisciplinary nature and the interaction between technical proficiency and critical thinking skills. ICT proficiency, information literacy, media literacy, digital scholarship, communication and collaboration, digital identity and wellbeing, and digital learning and development are among the seven components of digital literacy that are identified by the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) in their Digital Literacy Framework (JISC, 2014). Similar to this, Doug Belshaw's Digital Literacy Wheel provides a visual depiction of digital literacy by emphasizing eight crucial components: civic, critical, creative, constructive, creative, confident, and cultural (Belshaw, 2011). The significance of approaching digital literacy holistically and incorporating a variety of skills and competencies is emphasized by these frameworks.

3) Components of Digital Literacy: Several fundamental elements make up digital literacy, which is necessary for successfully navigating the digital environment. These elements consist of, but are not restricted to:

3.1) Information literacy: the capacity to find, assess, and apply critical thinking to information obtained from digital sources. This entails evaluating the reliability, relevance, and correctness of information found online.
3.2) Media Literacy: The capacity to evaluate and decipher messages from a variety of media, including text, pictures, and videos. The ability to discern between fact and opinion and to comprehend the persuasive strategies employed in the media are two benefits of media literacy.
3.3) Technological Proficiency: The technical know-how needed to efficiently use digital gadgets, software, and online platforms. This covers digital content creation tools, digital communication tools, and fundamental computer operations.
3.4) Critical Thinking: The capacity to critically assess and analyze data, arguments, and assertions. To identify biases, spot false information, and make wise decisions in digital environments, one needs critical thinking abilities.
When taken as a whole, these elements help people become more digitally literate and enable them to interact with information and technology in meaningful ways.

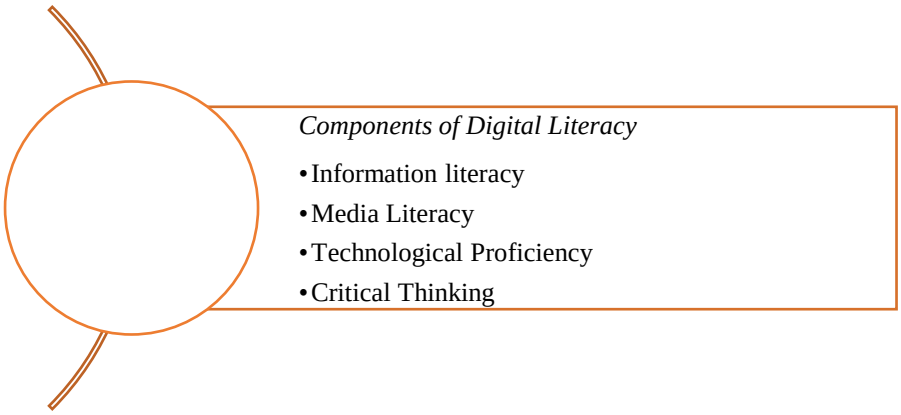

Figure 1 Components of Digital Literacy

In conclusion, digital literacy has changed from being primarily focused on technical skills to being a broad set of abilities that includes critical thinking, media literacy, and information literacy. The interdisciplinary nature of digital literacy is emphasized by contemporary frameworks like Belshaw's Digital Literacy Wheel and JISC's Digital Literacy Framework, which highlight its different components. These elements—technological competence, media literacy, information literacy, and critical thinking—are essential for successfully navigating the digital environment. People can interact with digital information and technology more effectively by taking a holistic approach to digital literacy. This promotes critical analysis, creativity, and well-informed decision-making in the digital age.

Digital Literacy in Educational Contexts

1) Digital Literacy in Formal Education: Schools and Universities: In formal education settings like colleges and universities, where it is incorporated into curriculum design and instructional practices to prepare students for the demands of the digital age, digital literacy is vital. Teachers use digital tools and resources to improve teaching and learning, and digital literacy is frequently integrated into all subject areas in schools. To encourage student engagement and the development of digital skills, educators can incorporate interactive learning platforms, multimedia presentations, and online research activities into their lessons (Martin et al., 2011). Similar to this, digital literacy is prioritized in higher education institutions to give students the skills they need for both academic success and future employment. To assist students in their academic pursuits and professional development, universities may provide courses and workshops on digital literacy skills, such as information literacy and digital research methods (Kurbanoglu et al., 2010).

2) Digital Literacy in Informal Education: Lifelong Learning and Beyond: Digital literacy encompasses not only formal education settings but also non-formal ones, such as community-based programs and lifelong learning initiatives. Digital technologies are becoming more and more important in enabling flexible and accessible learning opportunities for lifelong learners, who strive to continuously improve their skills and acquire new knowledge throughout their lives (García-Peñalvo & Conde, 2014). The promotion of digital literacy among a variety of populations, including adult learners, senior citizens, and marginalized communities, is greatly aided by informal education programs like those found in public libraries, museums, and online learning environments. These programs provide tools and assistance to people who want to improve their online information navigation, digital skill set, and participation in digital communities (Warschauer & Matuchniak, 2010).
3) Challenges and Opportunities in Integrating Digital Literacy into Education: While there are many opportunities to improve teaching and learning through the integration of digital literacy into education, there are also issues that need to be resolved to guarantee fair access and successful implementation. One issue is the "digital divide," which describes differences in how different socioeconomic groups have access to technology and the internet (Van Dijk, 2019). To close the digital divide, all students—regardless of their circumstances or background—must have equal access to digital resources and opportunities. Furthermore, creating digital literacy curricula and instructional strategies that satisfy students' varied needs and support academic objectives may present difficulties for educators (Livingstone & Helsper, 2007). To give educators the abilities and information required to successfully incorporate digital literacy into their teaching practices, professional development and support are crucial (Hatlevik & Hatlevik, 2018).

Figure 2 Digital Literacy in Educational Contexts

In conclusion, digital literacy is essential for improving learning and getting students ready for the digital age in both formal and informal education. The incorporation of digital tools into educational institutions provides students with fundamental skills, and community-based initiatives foster lifelong learning and digital inclusivity. Fair access depends on tackling issues like the digital divide and creating a curriculum that works. Encouraging educators via professional development guarantees the effective incorporation of digital literacy, catering to the varied requirements of every student.

The Impact of Digital Literacy on Teaching and Learning

1) Enhancing Pedagogy with Digital Literacy Skills: Proficiency in digital literacy can greatly improve pedagogy by revolutionizing conventional teaching methods and promoting more participatory and captivating educational experiences. Using digital tools and resources, educators can produce multimedia-rich teaching materials that accommodate a range of learning preferences and styles, including interactive presentations, simulations, and videos (Thompson, 2013). Furthermore, digital literacy gives teachers the ability to use cutting-edge

teaching techniques like blended learning and flipped classrooms, which give students more control over their education and allow them to access resources and work together with classmates virtually (Hrastinski, 2019). Additionally, digital literacy enables teachers to use digital assessment tools and learning analytics to tailor lessons and give students timely feedback, which results in more focused interventions and better learning outcomes (Gikandi et al., 2011).

2) Empowering Students to Navigate the Digital Landscape: Equipping students with digital literacy skills is crucial for their academic success and future job prospects in an increasingly digitalized world. According to Martin et al. (2011), digital literacy gives students the skills necessary to critically assess online content, engage in digital communities, and navigate the digital world. Students who acquire digital literacy skills participate actively in the digital ecosystem by producing and disseminating digital content, working on projects with peers, and participating in online forums (Bawden, 2008). Additionally, by encouraging moral conduct, responsible technology use, and awareness of online dangers and privacy concerns, digital literacy promotes digital citizenship (Ribble, 2015). In today's digital world, where online communication and digital interactions are commonplace, these abilities are becoming more and more crucial.

3) Case Studies and Examples of Successful Implementation: Digital literacy initiatives have been successfully implemented in educational settings, as demonstrated by a plethora of case studies and examples that underscore the transformative power of digital literacy on teaching and learning. For example, to improve educational opportunities and encourage digital literacy, the Maine Learning Technology Initiative (MLTI) in the United States gave laptops to all middle and high school students (Silvernail & Gritter, 2007). As a result of the program, student engagement, academic performance, and technological proficiency all increased, indicating the potential benefits of digital literacy for improving student outcomes. Similar to this, the DigComp framework developed by the European Commission offers a set of standards for digital competence to individuals, groups, and institutions of higher learning. This framework serves as a guide for incorporating digital literacy into training and educational initiatives throughout Europe (Carretero et al., 2017). The aforementioned instances highlight the significance of strategic planning, infrastructure assistance, and stakeholder cooperation in the effective execution of digital literacy programs.

In conclusion, digital literacy transforms pedagogy and equips students with the skills they need to successfully navigate the digital world, greatly enhancing teaching and learning. Teachers use digital tools to make interesting resources and try new things in the classroom, and students learn how to evaluate information critically and be responsible digital citizens. The digComp framework and the Maine Learning Technology Initiative are two successful case studies that highlight the revolutionary potential of digital literacy in education. These illustrations show how crucial strategic planning and assistance are to guarantee the successful execution of digital literacy initiatives, which in turn creates a more vibrant and welcoming learning environment.

Conceptual Framework

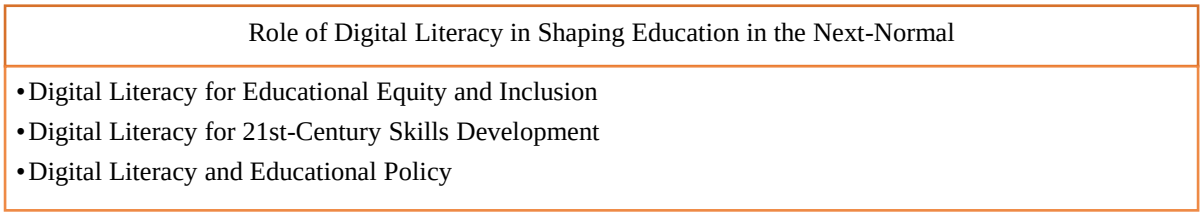

Figure 3 Conceptual Framework

Methodology

A comprehensive literature review of relevant academic studies, empirical research, and scholarly articles is one aspect of the methodology used for digital literacy and its effects on education. Credible online repositories, scholarly publications, conference proceedings, and electronic databases like PubMed, Scopus, and ERIC are some of the sources of data used in This paper. Studies that address the impact of digital literacy on education are carefully located and selected for data collection, with a focus on emerging themes and current research in the field. Important concepts, trends, and patterns about how digital literacy affects pedagogy, instructional strategies, and student outcomes are discovered following a thematic analysis of the collected data.

Results

Digital Literacy for Educational Equity and Inclusion

The strategies for addressing the digital divide, ensuring access to digital learning opportunities, and promoting diversity and inclusion through digital literacy are the main topics of discussion in this section, which dives into the use of digital literacy for educational equity and inclusion.

1) Addressing the Digital Divide: To guarantee that all students have fair access to digital literacy and educational opportunities, it is essential to address the digital divide. According to Van Dijk (2019), the term "digital divide" describes the differences in internet connectivity and technology access between various socioeconomic groups. Governments, academic institutions, and community organizations must work together to ensure that all communities, especially those in underprivileged areas, have equitable access to digital resources and infrastructure to close the digital divide (Warschauer, 2003). Reduced barriers to digital access and the provision of necessary digital skills to marginalized populations are the goals of programs like subsidized internet access programs, community digital literacy centers, and mobile learning initiatives (Warschauer & Matuchniak, 2010). Stakeholders can guarantee that all students have the chance to acquire digital literacy skills and actively engage in the digital society by tackling the digital divide.

2) Ensuring Access to Digital Learning Opportunities: To develop digital literacy and advance educational equity, it is imperative to guarantee access to digital learning opportunities. A variety of activities fall under the category of digital learning opportunities, such as interactive learning platforms, educational apps, virtual field trips, and online courses. However, students without dependable internet access or access to digital devices may have limited access to these resources (Gonzalez, 2016). The provision of equitable access to digital learning resources and infrastructure, such as guaranteeing high-speed internet connectivity in schools and providing loaner devices to students in need, must be a top priority for educational institutions and legislators (Gonzalez, 2016). Teachers can also use low-tech solutions and offline digital resources to accommodate students who have limited access to technology (Warschauer, 2003). Stakeholders can empower learners to develop critical digital literacy skills and thrive in the digital age by guaranteeing access to digital learning opportunities.

3) Promoting Diversity and Inclusion through Digital Literacy: To foster diversity and inclusion through digital literacy, it is important to acknowledge and value the range of viewpoints, experiences, and backgrounds that students in digital learning environments have to offer. Initiatives promoting digital literacy should aim to be inclusive and culturally sensitive, meeting the needs and preferences of a wide range of learners (Friedman, 2016). Accommodating students from a variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds involves offering multilingual resources, culturally relevant content, and accessible learning materials (Friedman, 2016). Furthermore, creating a warm and accepting learning environment where all students feel appreciated, respected, and empowered to participate is essential to advancing

diversity and inclusion through digital literacy (Warschauer & Matuchniak, 2010). Through digital literacy, stakeholders can foster diversity and inclusion and make education more accessible and equitable for all students.

In conclusion, empowering all students to acquire critical digital literacy skills requires addressing the digital divide, guaranteeing access to digital learning opportunities, and fostering diversity and inclusion. By doing this, all parties involved can improve educational equity and accessibility and help every student succeed in the digital age.

Digital Literacy for 21st-Century Skills Development

This section examines digital literacy for the development of 21st-century skills by focusing on three main areas: creativity and innovation, collaboration and communication, and critical thinking and problem-solving.

1) Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving: In the twenty-first century, digital literacy is essential for developing students' critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. People must critically assess the reliability, relevance, and credibility of information they come across in digital environments, where they are exposed to a plethora of data from diverse sources (Martin et al., 2011). Using digital tools and resources, students with digital literacy can analyze complex problems, spot patterns, and develop solutions that are supported by evidence (Bawden, 2008). Furthermore, digital platforms facilitate cooperative problem-solving and knowledge exchange by enabling users to participate in online forums, work together on projects, and get input from specialists and peers (Martin et al., 2011). Digital literacy helps students build critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, which better equips them to meet the demands of the digital age and make valuable contributions to society.

2) Collaboration and Communication: The development of collaboration and communication skills, which are becoming more and more important in the workforce of the twenty-first century, depends on digital literacy. Digital technologies break down geographical barriers and facilitate global connections by enabling individuals to collaborate with peers, colleagues, and stakeholders in virtual environments (Gikandi et al., 2011). No matter where they are in the world, students can collaborate on projects, exchange ideas, and communicate in real time using digital communication tools like social media, email, instant messaging, and video conferencing (Gikandi et al., 2011). Additionally, digital literacy improves a person's communication abilities and online presence by enabling them to express themselves creatively through blogging, podcasting, multimedia content creation, and other digital platforms (Bawden, 2008). Digital literacy helps students hone their teamwork and communication abilities, which helps them build the social skills necessary to succeed in a variety of connected and varied digital environments.

3) Creativity and Innovation: According to Martin et al. (2011), digital literacy encourages creativity and innovation by giving people the means to express themselves artistically, try out novel concepts, and come up with creative answers to pressing problems in the real world. Through digital art, music, video production, coding, gaming, and other digital media, digital platforms provide countless opportunities for creative expression (Bawden, 2008). Additionally, digital literacy allows people to interact with communities of practice, access enormous information repositories, and use free educational resources to stimulate innovation and creativity (Martin et al., 2011). Through the acquisition of digital literacy skills, students take an active role in the digital economy, generating new ideas, goods, and services that propel both societal advancement and economic growth (Gikandi et al., 2011). In an ever-evolving digital environment, digital literacy enables people to think critically, communicate clearly, and innovate creatively.

In conclusion, the development of 21st-century skills like critical thinking, problem-solving, teamwork, communication, creativity, and innovation depends heavily on digital literacy. Through the development of these skills, digital literacy equips students with the necessary

tools to successfully navigate and contribute to the digital era, improving their ability to solve challenging issues, work with people around the world, and advance social and economic progress.

Digital Literacy and Educational Policy

This section covers three key areas in the field of digital literacy and educational policy: national and international initiatives; policy implications for curriculum development and teacher training; and future directions and recommendations.

1) National and International Initiatives: Promoting digital literacy and incorporating it into educational practices and policies is greatly aided by national and international initiatives. Several initiatives have been put in place by governments, educational institutions, and international bodies to address the need for digital literacy in preparing citizens for the challenges of the digital age (Carretero et al., 2017). As an illustration, nations like Finland and Estonia have included digital literacy in their national education strategies, utilizing extensive frameworks and standards to direct the creation of curricula and evaluation procedures (Carretero et al., 2017). Comparably, international bodies like the European Commission have created frameworks like DigComp to specify digital competency requirements and offer directives for digital literacy programs throughout Europe (Carretero et al., 2017). These programs highlight how crucial it is for stakeholders, governments, and educational institutions to work together to advance digital literacy both domestically and internationally.

2) Policy Implications for Curriculum Development and Teacher Training: Policies about digital literacy have a big impact on how curricula are developed and how teachers are trained. They also influence how educational institutions approach content, pedagogy, and assessment. To guarantee that students acquire the necessary digital skills and competencies, policy frameworks offer guidance on integrating digital literacy across subject areas and grade levels (Carretero et al., 2017). To ensure coherence and efficacy in teaching digital literacy, curriculum designers should ensure that learning objectives, instructional materials, and assessment techniques are in line with digital literacy standards (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2020). Furthermore, according to Hatlevik & Hatlevik (2018), teacher preparation programs must provide instructors with the information, abilities, and tools they need to successfully incorporate digital literacy into their lesson plans. To assist educators in navigating the intricacies of digital learning environments and improving their pedagogy for digital literacy, professional development initiatives, mentorship programs, and continuous support are crucial (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2020). Through the consideration of policy implications for curriculum development and teacher training, interested parties can guarantee the systematic integration of digital literacy into educational practices and systems.

3) Future Directions and Recommendations: Looking ahead, new opportunities and challenges in the digital landscape should be the main focus of future directions in digital literacy policy. To guarantee that digital literacy policies stay current and useful, policymakers must take into account changes in digital culture, technological advancements, and changing educational needs (Carretero et al., 2017). Furthermore, to determine the best practices for implementation and to evaluate the effects of digital literacy initiatives on teaching and learning outcomes, ongoing research and evaluation are required (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2020). Future digital literacy policies should prioritize digital inclusion and equity, encourage innovation in digital literacy education, and promote collaboration among educational stakeholders (Carretero et al., 2017). Policymakers can help learners acquire the skills and competencies required to succeed in the digital age by taking a forward-thinking stance and embracing new developments in digital literacy.

In conclusion, it is critical to advance digital literacy through coordinated national and international initiatives, thorough curriculum development, and teacher preparation. Future regulations must prioritize digital inclusion, keep up with technological advancements, and encourage creativity to guarantee that students graduate with the skills they need to succeed in the digital age.

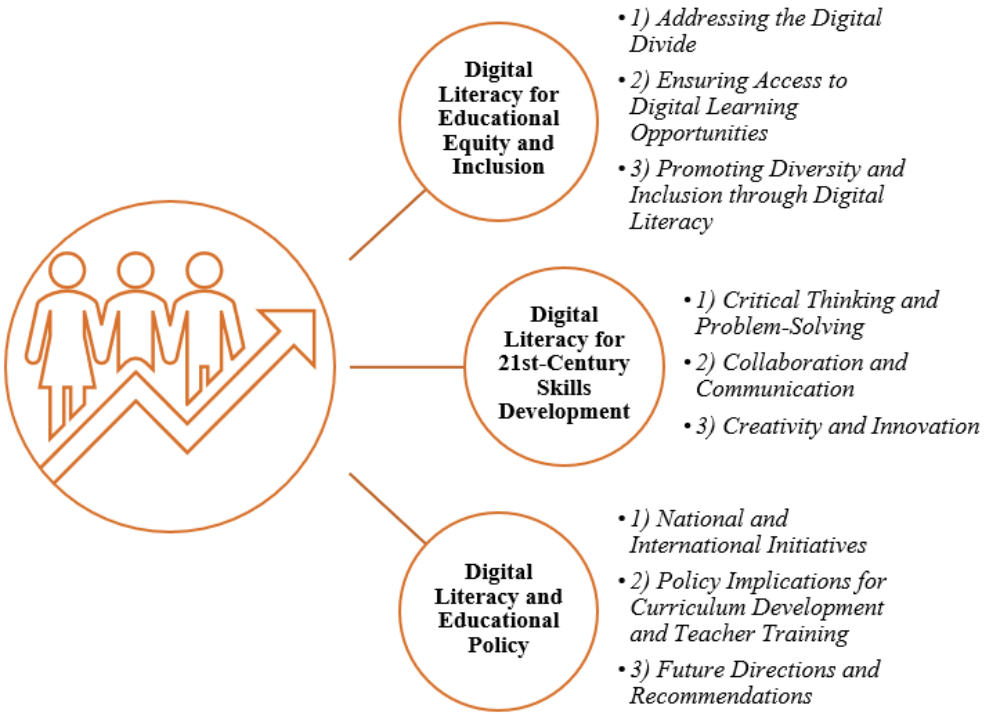

Figure 4 Role of Digital Literacy in Shaping Education in the Next-Normal

Conclusion and Discussion

The results of "The Role of Digital Literacy in Shaping Education in the Next-Normal" highlight the importance of digital literacy in education from a variety of angles.

First off, by addressing the digital divide, digital literacy is essential to advancing educational equity and inclusion. Digital literacy initiatives have the potential to promote diversity and inclusion in education by bridging the gap by guaranteeing access to digital learning opportunities, especially for marginalized communities (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2020). Additionally, teaching educators and students digital literacy skills can enable people to use digital resources efficiently, which will support fair access to opportunities and resources for education.

Second, the development of 21st-century abilities such as creativity, innovation, cooperation, problem-solving, critical thinking, and communication depends on digital literacy (Hsin & Cigas, 2013). Proficiency in digital literacy is essential for students to effectively navigate and evaluate information, collaborate with peers, and adapt to new technologies and platforms in the rapidly changing digital landscape. Teachers can develop these crucial abilities and set students up for success in an increasingly digital world by incorporating digital literacy into their curricula and instructional strategies.

Finally, there are implications for curriculum development, teacher preparation, and future directions in education from the intersection of digital literacy and educational policy (Ertmer et al., 2012). Digital literacy-related national and international initiatives frequently have an impact on policy decisions about teacher professional development, assessment procedures, and curriculum standards. Additionally, digital literacy programs guide policymakers in

developing frameworks that facilitate the efficient use and execution of digital tools and resources in educational settings. These frameworks are recommendations for the integration of technology into education.

The results demonstrate how digital literacy can significantly impact education in the next normal. Digital literacy initiatives can help people and organizations better prepare for the opportunities and challenges of the digital age by addressing issues of equity and inclusion, promoting the development of 21st-century skills, and influencing educational policy.

In summary, a reassessment of the role that digital literacy will play in forming the future of education is imperative given the swift adoption of digital technologies in education, which has been expedited by the COVID-19 pandemic. This paper emphasizes the critical role that digital literacy plays in promoting educational equity, the development of 21st-century skills, and well-informed educational policy through an extensive review of the literature. Digital literacy becomes an essential educational tenet as we move toward the "next normal," which promotes equity, creativity, and flexibility. For equal access and success in a digitally-driven world, educators and students alike must develop a high level of digital literacy to navigate the constantly changing educational landscape and fully utilize technology.

Policy Recommendation

1) Addressing the Digital Divide: Policymakers must give precedence to endeavors aimed at mitigating the digital divide, guaranteeing that every student has fair access to digital learning opportunities. To give underprivileged communities access to digital devices and the internet, this may entail making infrastructure and resource investments.

2) Promoting Diversity and Inclusion: Legislators ought to enact measures that promote inclusivity and diversity by teaching digital literacy. Lawmakers can foster an environment where all students have equal opportunities to acquire critical digital skills by encouraging diversity and inclusion.

3) Integration of Digital Literacy Standards: Digital literacy standards ought to be incorporated into curriculum frameworks and educational policies by policymakers. This integration guarantees that all students, irrespective of their circumstances or background, have the chance to acquire fundamental digital skills.

4) Prioritizing Educational Equity: Policies that seek to level the playing field in accessing digital learning opportunities must be given top priority by lawmakers, given the significance of digital literacy for educational equity and inclusion. Policymakers can establish a more inclusive and equitable education system that equips all students for success in the digital age by placing a high priority on educational equity.

Further Research Recommendation

Firstly, examining how well digital literacy interventions support the development of vital 21st-century abilities like creativity, innovation, cooperation, problem-solving, and critical thinking. Secondly, carrying out longitudinal research to thoroughly assess the effects of digital literacy programs on students' academic performance, cognitive growth, and socioemotional abilities over time.

Lastly, investigates how digital literacy influences curriculum development, teacher preparation, and the direction of education going forward at the national and international levels. Filling in these research voids will offer insightful information that will support evidence-based policy choices and improve teaching strategies in the post-normal world.

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