

# Teachers' Role in Fostering Responsible Digital Citizenship and Digital Citizenship

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## Abstract

The previous two years have seen a massive rise in pupils' exposure to the internet and the digital world due to pandemic conditions. The world-wide lockdown crisis prompted an emergency reaction that included a total transition to online teaching and providing gadgets to everyone. Whether we choose to or are forced to, the internet and virtual world have now become an integral part of our life. The globe is fast becoming a technological center, which has had exciting effects on our lives but also created new issues. We learn about cyberbullying, internet frauds, and the abuse of social networking sites. Credit card fraud, illicit downloading and copying, dangerous gaming addiction, malware, pornography, and hate websites are all examples. Cybercrimes against children are rising at an alarming rate in tandem with children's increased exposure to the internet and digital environment. The most recent statistics from the National Crime Record Bureau shows that cybercrime against minors in India increased 400% between 2019 and 2020. The moment has come for us to consider the dos and don'ts of this rapidly changing world, or, to put it another way, how to become digital citizens. A digital citizen is a person who has a space of their own in the digital world. The protection of digital citizens is the goal of the rights and obligations that come with being a digital citizen. Teaching pupils about Digital Citizenship is essential in our technologically advanced environment. It becomes crucial to prepare children for digital citizenship in a society where they are constantly using gadgets like smartphones and tablets. The role and obligations of every digital citizen are discussed in this chapter. The significance of the teacher's role in preparing tomorrow's digital citizens is emphasized in this chapter. Additionally, it discusses the subject matter and teaching strategies for digital citizenship.

**Keywords:** Digital Responsibility, Digital Citizenship, Role of Teachers, Digital rights

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## I. Introduction

The situation in education has radically changed as a result of the COVID-19 epidemic. The global lockdown brought on by the COVID-19 epidemic has forced educational institutions worldwide to quickly develop a system that replaces the conventional teaching approach. School closures have compelled educational systems to swiftly transition to remote learning platforms including television, radio, and other forms of online and mobile learning. Our everyday lives now involve technology. A total switch to online learning techniques was an emergency response to the uncertain scenario produced by the Covid-19 outbreak, even though the world was already moving toward mobile and digital learning owing to technical improvements. Digitization of the educational system is the new mantra.

### Pros and cons of digitization

Whether we choose to do so or were forced to, the internet and virtual world have now become an integral part of our life. On the one hand, the internet has positively impacted our lives, but it has also brought forth brand-new issues. While the rapidly evolving digital world of the Internet has brought about beneficial changes in our lives, it has also given rise to previously unheard-of societal issues. We had fewer social interactions in the past; we saw just a small number of people in person and engaged with them. We now have the doors open to the world of internet at our fingertips due to web-2 technologies. Even the children and students have mobiles and tablets in their hands, and they are socially active in the virtual world. Now, it's the time that we all must think about how to adopt ourselves in this world, which is moving at a very fast pace, and how to become efficient citizens of the digital world.

We learn about cyberbullying, internet frauds, and the improper and unlawful usage of social networking sites. There are instances of credit card fraud, unlawful downloading and copying, dangerous gaming addiction, viruses, pornography, hate websites, and, more recently, websites and programs for human auctions. These are also known as "digital diseases." In the same way that we teach the general public how to live in a real society, we also need to educate the public about the proper use of the internet and the masses. Additionally, we need to

teach students about the dangers of using the internet, how to behave in the digital world, and the inappropriate and unethical uses of the internet.

### **Digital Citizen**

The ability to participate constructively, critically, and competently in the digital world while using technology responsibly is known as "digital citizenship." It depends on the ability to communicate and create effectively in order to participate in social activities that respect human rights and dignity. Taking part in a dual process of lifelong learning (in formal, informal, and non-formal settings) and continuously defending oneself; actively and responsibly (values, skills, attitudes, and knowledge) in communities (local, national, and international) at all levels (political, economic, social, cultural, and intercultural). The foundation of this approach to digital citizenship is found in (Council of Europe, 2016), which acknowledges that citizens must learn and practice the competences they need to fully participate in a democratic society. As a result, education plays a critical role in training young people to live as engaged citizens and assisting them in acquiring the necessary skills and competencies. As a result, digital citizenship entails the ability to use digital technology securely and responsibly, as well as being an engaged and respectful part of society both online and offline.

The definition of Digital Citizenship concluded from words of 'Mike Ribble' can be concluded as, 'Digital Citizenship can be the norms of suitable and accountable behaviour in respect to the use of technology'. These are categorised in 9 elements which are given as follows-

1. Digital Etiquettes: This refers to the appropriate code of conduct for the web world. What should be done and what should not be done comes under this element.
2. Digital Communication: It refers to the electronic exchange of information.
3. Digital Literacy: This refers to the appropriate knowledge of technology and its application in daily life.
4. Digital Access: This refers to the electronic participation in the society.
5. Digital Commerce: This refers to the electronic buying and selling of the goods.
6. Digital Law: This refers to the electronic responsibility for the actions and deeds.
7. Digital Rights and Responsibilities: This comes by the freedom offered to every individual in the digital world.
8. Digital Security: These are the electronic measures to guarantee safety or can be termed as self protection in the digital world.
9. Digital Health and Wellness: This refers to the physical and mental health in this world of digital technology.

### **Digital citizenship education**

In the Digital Age, Citizenship The process of giving kids the tools they need to study and participate actively in a digital culture is known as education. In order to promote and uphold democracy, human rights, and the rule of law in cyberspace, as well as to exercise and defend their democratic rights and obligations online, users will require this knowledge, expertise, and comprehension. Fundamentally, its goal is to prevent future generations of people who are not "digital natives" or who lack access to chances to become "digital citizens," or "Digizens," from falling behind. The "digital divide" is more likely to be a skills gap than a lack of access to technology now that relatively cheap technology has been introduced. Schools are establishing "Digital Citizenship Education" in a variety of nations to encourage young people to enhance their online fluency, involvement, and creativity, as well as understanding of the legal ramifications of their online activities. Digital citizenship is a new type of citizenship education that focuses on teaching students how to work, live, and share in constructive ways in digital contexts.

### **Digital citizenship domains**

The practices found in the multistakeholder consultation report were analyzed and categorized using eleven competency areas established by the Expert Group on Digital Citizenship Education (DCE). The expert panel defined a number of skill categories that recurred in some fashion in order to arrive at a set of competencies that would be the intersection between all of them. These 10 digital domains were chosen as a consequence of this intersection because they align with every dimension taken into account in the other frameworks. To further define the skills that Digital Citizens should learn, the 10 categories are conceptually separated into three groups:

- The first category, Being online, Contains domains that relate to the skills required to participate in the digital society and freely express oneself.
- The second category, Wellbeing Online, Contains websites that can assist users in participating constructively in the digital world.
- The third group, It is my right! Relates to digital capabilities relating to citizen rights and obligations in complex, diverse societies. The ten themes of digital citizenship are divided into three categories:

#### **Being online**

- **Access and Inclusion**

This relates to digital access and encompasses a wide range of competencies that relate not only to overcoming various forms of digital exclusion, but also to the abilities required of future citizens to engage in digital spaces that are accessible to any kind of minority or diversity of viewpoint.

- **Learning and Creativity**

This refers to people's motivation and attitude toward learning in digital settings throughout their lives, in order to develop and express various forms of creativity using various tools in various contexts. It covers personal and professional development competencies to prepare citizens to confront the challenges of technologically advanced society with confidence, competence, and creativity.

- **Media and Information Literacy**

This is the capacity to analyze, understand, and communicate creativity through digital media using critical thinking. It is essential to go beyond only "knowing how to" use one or more media or "being educated" about anything; being media and information literate requires education and constant engagement with the world around us. A digital citizen has to maintain a mindset that is based on critical thinking in order to engage in meaningful and productive community involvement.

### **Wellbeing online**

- **Ethics and Empathy**

This domain is about online ethical behaviour and interaction with others, and it is built on abilities like the capacity to recognise and understand others' feelings and viewpoints. Empathy is a must for healthy online connection and taking use of the opportunities that the digital world provides.

- **Health and Wellbeing**

Both virtual and physical areas are home to digital citizens. As a result, digital competence's fundamental abilities are insufficient. Individuals must also have a set of attitudes, skills, values, and information that makes them more conscious of health and wellness challenges. In a technologically rich society, health and wellbeing entails being aware of the difficulties and possibilities that might affect wellness, such as internet addiction, ergonomics and posture, and excessive use of digital and mobile devices, to name a few.

- **ePresence and Communications**

This domain refers to the development of personal and interpersonal qualities that assist digital citizens in creating and sustaining a positive, coherent, and consistent online presence and identity, as well as positive, coherent, and consistent online interactions. It includes skills such as online communication and engagement with others in virtual social spaces, as well as data and trace management.

### **Rights Online**

- **Active Participation**

Citizens need to be fully aware of how they interact within the digital settings they inhabit in order to make responsible decisions while participating actively and positively in the democratic cultures in which they live, which is what active participation refers to.

- **Rights and Responsibilities**

Citizens have rights and obligations in the physical world, and digital citizens have rights and responsibilities in the online world as well. Privacy, security, access and inclusion, freedom of expression, and other rights are all available to digital citizens. However, those rights come with obligations, such as ethics and empathy, as well as other responsibilities to create a safe and responsible digital environment for everybody.

- **Privacy and Security**

This domain encompasses two distinct ideas: Privacy is primarily concerned with protecting one's own and others' online information, whereas Security is more concerned with one's own understanding of online actions and behaviour. This domain encompasses skills such as effectively managing personal and other people's online information, as well as dealing with online safety (such as the use of navigation filters, passwords, antivirus, and firewall software) to avoid potentially dangerous or uncomfortable situations.

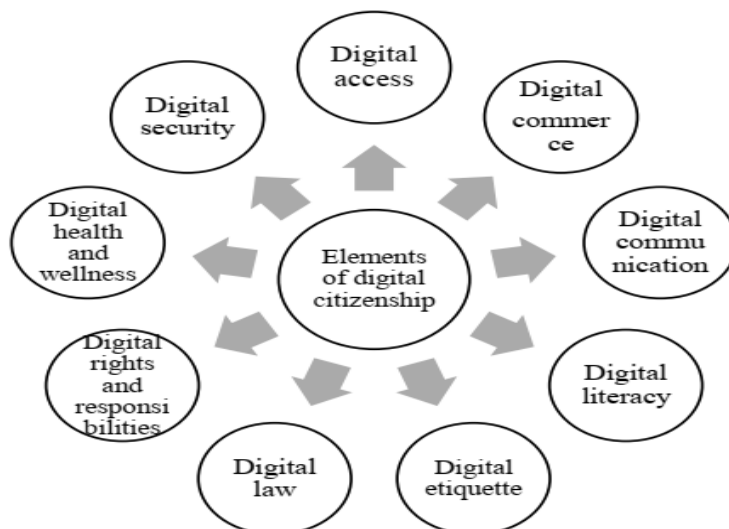
- **Consumer Awareness**

The internet, in all of its forms, such as social media and other virtual social spaces, is a place where being a digital citizen often entails being a customer. Understanding the ramifications of much online space's commercial reality is one of the skills that individuals will need to protect their autonomy as digital citizens.

### **Elements of digital citizenship**

Everyone should be at ease and feel safe in the online world. Children should be taught how to use technology properly in order to preserve the internet environment for future generations, as education is at the core of society. In their book, *Digital Citizenship in Schools*, Mike Ribble and Gerald Bailey explore how technology affects

interpersonal relationships and the idea of digital citizenship in the classroom. Nine facets of digital citizenship are discussed by the writers, and they are all connected to technology use in and out of the classroom:



### Digital Responsibilities and Rights

“Being digitally responsible requires us to be a part of a digital citizenship, which encompasses the norms of responsible and appropriate behaviour online. Digital citizenship is ‘a way of life’, and everyone who uses the internet must understand their role and responsibilities”(Ribble, 2015).

### Key Digital Rights

The major digital rights can be given as,

- Right to use internet or any other electronic device
- Right to use and access online material
- Right to innovate and sharing of digital material on internet media.
- Right to have safety in digital world
- Right to express own ideas and suggestions without any hinderance
- Right to complain about unethical or illegal use of anything that seems inappropriate.

### Key Digital Responsibilities

- There is no space for cyberbullying, one should use behave properly while interacting with others proper language while interacting with others.
- Respect the ideology of others
- To follow all intellectual property laws
- Not using or sharing others' work without permission
- Following rules and codes of conduct for every site on internet
- Responsibility to report anything that seems inappropriate or in acceptable in the digital world.

### Importance of teaching digital citizenship in schools

Everybody's life now revolves on technology, and pupils are exposed to it from an early age. The COVID-19 pandemic lockdown has made it easier for kids to use the internet. According to CRY-Child Rights and You CEO Puja Marwaha, "children have become more vulnerable to multiple risks, particularly in the contexts of online sexual abuse, grooming or sexual solicitation, sexting, exposure to pornography, production and circulation of child sexual abuse material, cyber-bullying, online harassment, cyber-victimization, and many other privacy-related risks," even though they are spending more time online for educational and communication purposes. Children are becoming exposed to the internet and the digital world at an alarming rate, which has led to an upsurge in cybercrimes against them. **According to the latest NCRB data, there has been an increase of 400 percent in cybercrime against children in 2020 in comparison to 2019.** Most of the crime data is related to publication or distribution of materials depicting children in sexually explicit act. In this condition, it is important for schools to include and teach digital citizenship into their syllabus from the very beginning. Therefore, it becomes crucial for educators and parents to try to teach students the rights and responsibilities as well as the awareness of digital citizenship, also known as digital ethics or digital wellness, in addition to teaching them how to be decent and responsible members of society. In order to prepare pupils for life in the technologically

advanced modern world, digital citizenship is crucial. Teaching children digital citizenship is crucial in a society where they utilize electronic devices. Students who possess knowledge of digital citizenship are better equipped to succeed as lifelong learners. This also helps them learn to participate within a digital environment with accountability and self-confidence to develop as leaders who will leave meaningful influences in the lives of others.

### **Key Elements of Digital Citizenship**

The key elements which can be the base of digital citizenship curriculum are,

#### **Information Literacy**

The advent of technology has made it simpler than ever for everyone to obtain knowledge. You only need to click to access Wikipedia, dictionaries, research, books, and reference materials. Identifying appropriate and inappropriate content on the internet has become a new difficulty for internet users. If we don't know how to extract the relevant and usable information from the millions of pieces of information that are available with just a single click, it won't be of any value. Teaching pupils digital literacy gives them the knowledge and abilities they need to use the internet and technology to their advantage. Additionally, it allows students to use the ever-expanding range of websites and communication channels in the most effective manner possible to quickly obtain information. This also includes teaching how to use a search engine, as well as which sites are trustworthy to use as reference materials, as well as another valuable knowledge.

#### **Cyberbullying Prevention**

Cyberbullying is one of the main reasons for concern when it comes to internet abuse. To stop cyberbullying, we must teach pupils how to interact politely in the online community. Guidelines for online communication should be established, and responsible online communication should be taught from an early age. The dos and don'ts should have well-defined limits. It should be made clear to students that they must report any online behavior that makes them uncomfortable. They ought to be informed of the behaviors that constitute cyberbullying. Establishing a solid foundation for kids to develop into responsible digital citizens who navigate the real and virtual worlds with kindness, humanity, and empathy will be made possible by modeling proper and polite behavior for them and holding them accountable for following these rules.

#### **Online Safety**

Online safety is the most essential life lessons to be taught in digital citizenship. Students who are trained to know and prioritize online safety, feel confident of their digital lives and are less likely to fall prey to possible online threats. Teach students to protect themselves and their identities by visiting appropriate websites, refraining from posting personal information about themselves and others, trusting their gut, and notifying a trusted adult when things don't feel right. All of these things play a vital role in keeping students safe in digital space and allow them to blossom as empowered Digital Citizens.

#### **Digital Responsibility**

Digital obligations accompany the benefits of a digital society. For students to succeed academically and socially, they must be taught to utilize their authority responsibly. Instructors should implement a curriculum that teaches students how to avoid potential threats like viruses, hacking, and piracy. They should also educate students about any inappropriate behavior and establish clear limits. Students need to understand the consequences of using the internet improperly. The student will act appropriately in the online environment if he is aware of the regulations about digital safety; if not, he may fall prey to any online danger. Students need to be taught how to use the websites securely and refrain from sharing any personal information online. They must trust their intuition and have trust in adults or their teachers when they feel anything inappropriate. All these measures help them in playing safe in the digital world and to become a sensible Digital Citizen. The IT act should be known to everyone to distinguish between what is legal and what is illegal.

#### **Health & Emotional Wellness in the Digital World**

There can be an addiction of technology, and that addiction can be damaging to students' health. Extended use of technology always has a negative impact on physical and psychological health. It causes problems related to eyes, posture, diet, and even mental health. While teaching students about digital citizenship we should prioritize the physical and mental health of students. In the spirit of teaching students about Digital Citizenship effectively we must prioritize the health and wellness of students. Integrating creative approaches to teach students to use technology safely in ways that preserve and protect their social-emotional health and physical growth, along with both the fundamental benefits and dangers created by extensive online engagement, is a must. Limiting online time should be encouraged while taking frequent breaks to stretch, eat, and hydrate.



### **Role of teachers in the Digital Citizenship Era**

In this coming age of technology and with the machines and recordings replacing the actual teacher sometimes a question comes that whether the importance of real classroom and teachers has diminished? It is often questioned that is the role of a teacher relevant anymore? If we try to find the answer to this question, the answer is yes, because in the digital era the importance of teachers has grown in student's lives. It is now more important for teachers to guide students in the right direction when the complex world of the internet is available at their fingertips. Teachers should be available to students of all ages to enable them to distinguish between what is right and wrong. The internet can be very helpful in complementing our education system but can never replace teachers.

### **Digital Responsibility of Teachers Worldwide**

The list below contains the code of professional ethics pertaining to the online world that were extracted from the UNESCO paper "Guidelines for the effective use of teachers code of conduct," which was created by the International Institute for Educational Planning and authored by "Murial Poisson." It included the codes of ethics and principles of professional conduct for the education profession in Florida (USA), the poster displaying the code of ethics for registered teachers in New Zealand, the teacher training modules in Victoria (Australia), the code of professional ethics for teachers in India, the code of professional ethics for teachers in South Africa, the code of professionalism and conduct in Scotland (U.K.), and more. The frequent codes are presented below once all the codes were collated.

#### **The professional educator maintains confidentiality in the use of technology by**

- (1) Taking measures to maintain confidentiality of student information and educational records stored or transmitted through the use of electronic or computer technology.
- (2) The professional educator promotes the appropriate use of technology in educational settings by advocating for equal access to technology for all students, especially those historically underserved.
- (3) Promoting the benefits of various appropriate technological applications with colleagues, appropriate school personnel, parents, and community members,
- (4) Promoting technological applications that are
  - (a) Appropriate for students' individual needs,
  - (b) Easily understandable by students
  - (c) Able to assist and enhance the teaching and learning process.

#### **The Digital Responsibility of the Teachers in India**

The National Professional Standard as Drafted by NCTE also states for, 'Responsible and ethical use of technology' It includes

- (1) Describing issues related to the use of technology and the importance of responsible and ethical use of technology in teaching and learning.
- (2) Ensuring safe use of technology in the classroom.
- (3) Employing strategies to promote responsible and ethical use of technology among students.
- (4) Teaching and training students to stay safe online inside and outside the classroom.
- (5) Reflecting and compiling best practices with colleagues for promoting the responsible and ethical use of technology.
- (6) Leading initiatives to promote responsible and ethical use of technology among students and colleagues.

**What is to be taught to Students:** There important issues to discuss with the students are:

- Cyberbehaviour
- Managing passwords
- Email and communication
- Protection from bugs
- Social and Internet media
- Literacy intelligence
- Netiquette
- Digital laws
- Hoax
- Spam
- Plagiarism

To get maximum benefit from any digital citizenship curriculum, it should be implemented from the beginning, Schools of each level should cooperate with each other to implement it in a fruitful manner.

## **Level of Students and Content of Cyber Responsibility**

### **For Primary Level Kids**

- How to go safely to online spaces
- Finding a balance in online and offline lives.
- Rules for asking to use devices.
- Limiting screen time and 'time up' limitation for digital time.

### **For Junior Classes:**

- Introducing the idea of digital citizenship
- What does it mean to behave properly in the digital world?
- Making students think about their online identity.
- Safely making meaningful connection with online communities
- Reinforcing balance in online and offline time.
- Reflecting about how technology makes them feel.

### **For Senior Classes**

- What does it mean to find credible sources?
- How does the internet impact their understanding of everything?
- The concept of digital footprint.
- Understanding that the data on the internet lasts forever.
- Connecting online bullying and hate speeches to real-world outcomes.
- Incorporating digital mindfulness and exploring balanced and responsible digital use.

### **Other things to teach students:**

- Act the same on the internet and in the real world.
- Don't share personal information online and don't ask others for their information too.
- Don't think anonymity protects you.
- Share your knowledge.

## **Developing Digital Responsibility in students**

Children need the chance to enquire about what they see online to understand how the cyber world works. A sense of critical curiosity must be developed in students, so they know to question images, research sources, and conclude their own decisions. We may make them believe some of the experiences they face online, like joining message boards and communicating with strangers or posting something hurtful without much thinking. Once their level of understanding about the concept is assessed, they should be given examples behaviour what they find appropriate or inappropriate. What are their views on doing any unknown online task? What are their views on sharing any private picture online?

## **Strategies to develop digital responsibility in classroom**

### **Exposure to experiential learning**

Though the students are already exposed to the digital world, lessons to learnt via experiential learning are important. True stories of online scams need to be discussed in the classroom. Time should be given to them to ponder over their own online posts and the reaction or feelings they had while doing so. What was the reason for their emotions? How can they make sure that their post is to make other people feel happy and respected?

### **Telling real life stories**

The technical knowledge should be made relevant to the student's lives. They should be taught that talking to a stranger online is just like talking with a stranger offline. A password is to keep them safe just like a lock. What are the consequences in real life if someone posted any offensive post online? In this way students can draw their own connections.

### **Demonstrating authenticity of online sources**

Students must understand how to find a credible source. They must be aware of the ways that how an information is distorted. To make the students understand this we can make the students find any topic on different databases websites and discuss their authenticities.

### **Making every student aware of the cyber etiquettes**

Just as students differ in their academic and social skills while entering the school in the similar way, they are different in their technological skills too. We do not have to assume what do they know or do not know in technical

skills. Just as we train all students in academic areas, we must train all the students to succeed in the technological world also.

### **Some useful resources to develop the digital citizenship curriculum**

There are many resources and guidelines already available on the internet that can help teachers create their own digital citizenship curriculum. The name of few available resources on the internet are:

- Be internet Awesome by Google
- Digital Literacy Curriculum by Microsoft
- Safe Online Curriculum by FBI
- Ignition a Curriculum of digital literacy and responsibility by Everfi

## **II. Conclusion**

In the current day, we have to embrace the new realities of digital citizenship. People are now more linked to one another in the virtual world than they were in the past. Due to their growing exposure to the online world, young children are also a part of the digital world. There are advantages and disadvantages to this exposure. We are heading toward a society in which we cannot live in harmony both online and offline if we are unaware of our digital rights and obligations. Because of the complexity of the online world, teachers now have more duties. Given the evolving landscape and the global movement to online learning, educators need to be aware of their digital obligations. To get the most out of the online world, one must be a good digital citizen. Understanding the fundamentals of the subject and assisting students in achieving the same degree of knowledge are key components in teaching digital citizenship. By educating students about the benefits and hazards associated with using the internet and participating in virtual worlds, teachers may assist students in playing an active and responsible role in the digital world.

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