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INFORMATION LITERACY IN INDIAN SCENARIO: ESSENTIAL FOR INFORMATION AGE

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ABSTRACT

In the age of Information Communication Technology and Information Revolution, Information based product is growing very fast and it has become very difficult to retrieve authentic information from the ocean of information. Whether it is library, media, computer, network or digital literacy, the main concept of literacy is to improve skills that help in problem solving, enhancing the life style, decision making etc. This paper aims to describe the concepts of literacy, essentiality of literacy and efforts taken by the Indian government in information age.

KEYWORDS: Information Literacy, Information age, Literacy Program.

INTRODUCTION

Today's world is living in information age and this age has brought new options in education, public service and business. The age of information communication technology and information revolution have earned amazing successes. After the invention of the computer, new dimensions are being established every day in this field. In the modern era, the main function of communication media is to inform and educate the people of the society. "A society in which the quality of life, as well as prospects of social change and economic development, depends increasingly on information and its exploitation. In such a society, living standards, pattern of work and leisure, the education system and the market place are all influenced markedly by advances in information and knowledge. This is evidenced by an increasing array of information-intensive products and services, communicated through a wide range of media, many of them electronic in nature" (Martin, 1995). The aim of educating the society is not only to read-write but developing the ability to find and use different types of information resource.

CONCEPT OF INFORMATION LITERACY

The initial concept of literacy includes several terms such as library, media, computer, network and digital literacy. The term "information literacy" first described in literature on behalf of the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science in 1974 by Paul G. Zurkowski as the techniques and skills known by the information literate for utilizing the wide range of information tools as well as primary sources in molding information solutions to their problems. (Tyner, 1998) define as "literacy is shorthand for cultural ideals as eclectic as economic development, personal fulfillment, and individual moral fortitude" and (American Association of School Librarians & Association for Educational Communications and Technology, 1998) stated that "To be information literate, a person must be able to recognize when information

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is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information. The information literate individuals are those who have learned how to learn" Information literacy is a set of necessary skills that enables a person to identify the requirement, retrieve, analyze, and use of information. Library literacy is related to literacy programs based in libraries and digital literacy is related to use of information and communication technologies. Main objectives of the both terms are to improve user literacy skills that are helps to use services and resources of any area. Whether it is library, media, computer, network or digital literacy, the main concept of literacy is to improve skills that help in problem solving, enhancing the life style, decision making etc.

WHY INFORMATION LITERACY IS ESSENTIALS

Information is as a key element in every field of human activity like education, industry, agriculture and lifelong learning. The socio- economic development of any community are strongly depends on the information. But the advancement of the information and communication technology has given birth to a new revolution known as information revolution; this revolution has affected the creation, storage, organization and distributions of information. Information based products is growing very fast since the information revolution and it has become very difficult to get the authentic information from the ocean of information. "Children and young people not only need to be able to read for information: they also need to be able to work out what trust they should place on the information and to identify when and how people are aiming to persuade or influence them" (CfE, 2009). "For all societies, Information Literacy is becoming an increasingly important component of not only literacy policies and strategies, but also of global policies to promote human development." (UNESCO, 2003) Now the time has come to extending the literacy program to facilitate better technological services for the development of human and society. (Association of College and Research Libraries, 2000) stated that an information literate person is able to gain more control over his own learning and become more self-directed. The essentiality of information literacy skills is increasing in the information age, because "information literate is able to:

i.   determine the extent of information needed
ii. access the needed information effectively and efficiently
iii. evaluate information and its sources critically
iv. incorporate selected information into one's knowledge base
v.   use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose
vi. understand the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information and
vii. access and use information ethically and legally"

INFORMATION LITERACY PROGRAMS IN INDIAN SCENARIO

In India, information literacy programs are supported and funded by National Literacy Mission Authority, headed by Minister of Human Resource Development, Government of India. National Literacy Mission Authority is responsible for policy and planning, development and promotional activities, voluntary agencies and other ngos, technical performance, leadership training, media and materials development research and development surveillance and evaluation. Many programs are running by government of India to increase rate of information literacy. Some of discussed as below:

- **Digital India**

    Digital India is the leading digital literacy program for transforming India into Digital India. It is centered on three key vision areas; digital infrastructure as a core utility to every citizen, governance and services on demand and digital empowerment of citizens. This supports digital literacy awareness, education and capacity programs that will help rural communities lead in the global digital economy.

- **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan**

    Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is the major initiative in the field of information literacy, this schemce is a Centrally Sponsored and implemented by Government of India in partnership with State Governments. The

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main aims of this scheme is to achieve universal enrolment of all children in the age group 6-14 years in elementary education, ensuring all children to learn at grade appropriate level.

- **Rashtriya Computer Literacy Drive**

Rashtriya computer literacy drive is an initiative by Sunita Skills Pvt.Ltd. To make "India 100% Computer Literate". The objective of the mission is to enable it to achieve more success by providing the best efforts and knowledge through the efforts and use of knowledge, skills, solutions and services. This will help in literacy in urban and rural areas respectively.

- **Akshaya**

Akshaya program is inaugurated by Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, former President of India on 18th November 2002 in Malappuram (Kerla). This program has three phases, "in the initial phase, the Akshaya e-centre imparts basic training that not only familiarizes with the basics and the scope of IT, but also ensures hands-on-skill in operating a computer, using the Internet etc to at least one person in the 64 lakh families in the state that makes it the largest rural e-literacy training project worldwide. Malappuram is declared as the first e-literate district in India. Malappuram and Kannur districts were already declared 100% e-literate. Kollam, Kozhikode, Thrissur and Kasargodu districts achieved e-literacy above 90% and is ready for declaration. So far around 33 lakhs beneficiaries were trained."

- **Mahila Samakhya and Saakshar Bharat Programs**

Mahila Samakhya and Saakshar Bharat schemes are literacy initiative for women started by Department of School Education & literacy, MHRD, Government of India. Mahila samakhya support the legal literacy and information related to rights of women in society and increasing women participations on a equal footing of all areas and Saakshar Bharat focusing on adult women literacy seeking for reduce the gap between male and female.

SUMMING UP

Today, the world is passing through the era of information revolution, new changes are taking place in different dimensions of life, agriculture, industry, health, education, and the environment. Information based product is growing very fast and it has become very difficult to retrieve authentic information from the ocean of information. Now days, it is essential for government to produce more new programs to increase the rate of literacy for the progress of our nation and society. Literacy has a deep connection with social and economic development.

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