

Book Review/Recension d'ouvrage

Digital Literacy Skills for FE Teachers

by Jonathan White

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The world is evolving to embrace new forms of technologies every day. As new technologies gain prominence, they are integrated into people's lives and the operations of organizations. In his book *Digital Literacy Skills for FE Teachers* (2015), author Jonathan White suggests that this continuous technological evolution necessitates a multifaceted and open approach to learning, for which teachers should continuously update their knowledge of emerging technologies (pp. 10, 21, 54). In this book, White provides practical and useful information on digital skills essential for teaching in the Further Education (FE) and Skills Sector. As a staff member at the University of Derby, he offers support to staff and students in further and higher education programmes. As an experienced teacher and librarian, the author has, over several decades, supported teachers and learners, as well as the development of digital and information literacies in various educational sectors in the United Kingdom. White intends his book to be a resource "for professional development in digital skills for those currently practising as teachers or those undertaking initial teacher training (ITT) in the FE and Skills sector" (p.3). The book has ten chapters, and themes discussed include: (a) understanding digital needs and advancing digital practice; (b) being critical with digital tools, information and media; (c) management of digital identity and responsible use of technologies; (d) copyright licensing and ethical use of digital information and media.

Understanding digital needs and advancing digital practices is more urgent than ever. The author argues that increasing digitalization in the UK requires informed digital literacy teachers (chapters 1 to 4). He highlights the benefits and opportunities of digital evolution (chapter one) and continues to emphasize essential competencies for effective teaching and inclusion of all learners (chapters two and four). Most importantly, he explains the need to stay current with modern trends. Furthermore, he urges teachers to avoid assumptions on students' technological aptitudes as it could lead to their "exclusion from the digital age" (p. 30). Next, White enumerates the subtle integrations of digital literacy in school curricula, and the changes the FE and Skills sector in the UK are making to embrace digital technologies, teach vital digital skills and lead educational developments in the digital age (p. 9).

The author encourages readers to critically examine their choices of digital tools, information and media (chapters five and six). He advises readers to inform their selection of digital resources based on their purpose and the terms and conditions documents of the resource. White also strongly recommends a thorough research of companies providing digital resources before using their products. He explains that readers should seek answers to the following questions; "(a) What data is collected and stored by the technology? (b) Do they list safeguards they have in place against data theft, hacks and data loss? (c) Do you (the user) retain ownership of your data and files" (p. 60)?

Managing digital identity while being responsible with technology is a balancing act (chapter seven). White urges readers to consider a "balance between personal and professional identities to enable them to choose appropriate digital services that will showcase their skills, talents and knowledge" (p. 98). In building a digital identity, White argues, "it is important to remember that demonstrating some of your interests and parts of your personality in a professional content may help you" (p. 89). Thus "balancing professional and personal life will increase people's interest in what you have to say" (p. 90). He goes on to discuss legal, ethical and professional obligations in a digital environment, including how teachers can recognize and respond to cyberbullying, grooming and pressurization online (chapter eight). Most importantly, White says, "teaching learners to understand what constitutes cyberbullying and to think critically before engaging in any activity which could be cyberbullying is extremely important, and you do not need to wait until a situation occurs before teaching these concepts" (pp. 106-107).

The ninth chapter is a discussion on copyright licensing and the ethical use of contents. Readers are invited to reflect on the question, “Freely available = free to reuse?” (p. 118)? In his response, the author cautions readers that a lack of understanding of the digital world could lead to breaking the law. Hence readers must appreciate that “all digital content are still copyrighted to an owner, whether it is free to access or requires payment to access” (p. 118). Additionally, he advises teachers against plagiarism and underscores UK copyright legislation on the purchase and use of digital content in educational institutions.

White provides readers with extensive information on digital literacy. However, his discussions of the seven strands of digital literacy (p. 22), principles to apply in interacting with digital technologies (p. 35), and the limitations of didactic, constructivist and connectivist pedagogical approaches (p. 52) could be strengthened with more research evidence. The strength of this text lies in the tone, unity, coherence and structure of the content. The author strengthens the book through his generous use of examples and activities to engage readers to reflect and apply their understanding of the text. Additional depth is provided in White’s comprehensive discussion of cyberbullying and his advocating for early detection, and support for victims. The author’s discussion of studies linking smartphone addiction to “narcissistic and neurotic behaviour and poor psychological health and wellbeing” is also significant (p. 63). *Digital Literacy Skills* provides a plethora of resources for professional development in digital skills and teaching and training in the FE and Skills sector.