Empowering Pedagogy Through Digital Skills: Navigating The Digital Landscape In Education

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Abstract

The importance of digital skills for teachers has risen significantly as they shift from traditional classroom environments to online teaching and learning methods. Despite the initial challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, educators have demonstrated a growing desire to enhance their digital competencies, recognizing that there is no alternative to achieving academic objectives. Governments across the globe, particularly in developing countries like India, have made it compulsory to teach students via digital platforms to maintain academic schedules. In response to the increasing demand for digital skills, this paper aims to offer teachers guidance on how to effectively instruct using an array of digital platforms and tools.

Keywords: Digital Skills, Blogs, Wikis, Digital Portfolios, Social Bookmarking, Quizzes, Audio, Video, Content.

Introduction

This paper emphasizes the importance of equipping educators with the necessary digital skills to navigate the digital landscape in education. In today's teaching and learning scenario, the use of digital tools is increasing rapidly, along with the demand for free access to knowledge. Renowned universities worldwide are gradually moving towards digital pedagogy to reach millions of individuals who are interested in pursuing online degrees or supporting academics for their professional development. It is worth noting that COVID has accelerated the transition to digital pedagogy. What might have taken a decade to achieve has been accomplished in two years during COVID.

However, many teachers across academic levels, from primary to higher education, still need to gain expertise in these skills to make teaching and learning an engaging experience.

In this paper, we will discuss seven basic digital skills that teachers should possess to make their methods, materials, and evaluation processes stimulating and motivating. The first essential skill is recording and editing audio clips, as it is the fundamental step to presenting any text digitally.

Record and Edit Audio Clips

One of the important and primary digital skills that a teacher requires is that of recording and editing audio clips. This is the basic step to present any text digitally. Here are some free software options that teachers can use:

1. Sodaphonic: This software is user-friendly and allows users to record and edit multiple files.
2. Audio Cutter: It supports approximately 300 file formats and can extract audio tracks from videos, making it easier for teachers to cut audio tracks in the browser window itself.
3. Ocenaudio: This software operates with a simple mechanism and provides real-time preview effects.
4. DVDVideoSoft: It has a simple interface, supports audio files with a select few formats, and can edit audio files visually and convert an audio track to any other kind of format.
5. Audacity: This software supports multiple file formats, records live audio, and digitizes recordings from various media files. It is easy to use.
6. Free Audio Editor: This software supports several export formats, has roughly thirty effects processing engines, can isolate or remove undesirable noise, and is easy to trim and convert audio files.

Create Appealing Presentations Using Visually Pleasing Content

Every class is important and must be interesting so that learners assimilate what is taught in class. The more the presentation is interesting the more the outcome would be from learners. Therefore, content and presentation should be inevitably stimulating and thought-provoking and the following points are to be put into practice.

1. Teachers can make dynamic presentations using software like Google Slides, Prezi, Zoho Presentation and Haiku Deck;
2. Design your slides creatively with visually attractive content using Piktochart, Google Draw, thinglink Canva, Glogster, etc.;
3. Write subtopics
4. Animate slides
5. Make text creative
6. Slides should of consistent Design
7. Create interactive presentations
8. Slides should have smooth transitions
9. Objects should be aligned with a grid
10. Create a non-linear presentation
11. Use shapes strategically
12. Use presenter notes

Use Social Bookmarking Websites to Curate and Share Resources

Social bookmarking is a way for users to search, manage, organize, and share web pages. Social bookmarking sites and apps make it easy to share content you find valuable and discover new trends. Unlike your browser bookmarks, social bookmarking sites are web-based tools, which means the content you save can be accessed from any device. Some of them are given below:

1. **Educlipper**
   The design of the website is simple, and the content of it is a treasure for teachers. It is an easy, stimulating way for teachers to share content with students.

2. **SymbalooEdu**
   This is a website designed for bookmarking and organizing websites. It is particularly useful for teachers and students who want to manage their favourite web pages, links, and other digital resources, which can be used to create lesson plans and enhance classroom teaching.

3. **Pinterest**
   Pinterest believes in a "show, don't tell" approach to teaching, and it has been successful. with millions of users.

4. **StumbleUpon**
   It is one of the biggest social bookmarking sites. While we bookmark something we can even add extra details too such as the type of content and the subject area. The toolbar makes this process simple. Besides, users are allowed to state their interests and related content will be found posted by others.

5. **Pocket**
   It's a well-designed social bookmarking site that helps teachers save and search for interesting content for teaching.

6. **Digg**
   Digg is a great place for teachers to find new content and it could be organised through teachers' profiles.

7. **Reddit**
   Reddit is known as the "front page of the Internet" where users share interesting links, images, and videos. Teachers can use this content by upvoting, commenting, or downvoting to create a list of bookmarked content.

8. **Slashdot**
   It maintains user-submitted news stories on cloud, computer hardware, storage, devices, Linux, mobile, etc.

9. **Scoop.it**
   It caters to the needs of teachers pinning other users' content, retweeting interesting content from other users and participating in discussions.

10. **We Heart It**
    It deals with images, GIFs and videos and acts as a social network too. It allows teachers and learners to submit articles also.

11. **Diigo**
    Teachers and students can use it to search, discuss, annotate, organize, archive, share, and bookmark web materials. It also facilitates professional and student collaboration, conversations, and feedback.

12. **Edshelf**
    It allows teachers to search by topic, grade level, or by categories such as "story creation apps.

Create annotated, interactive and engaging video content
Teachers should create content that gives a detailed and systematic summary of the topic. The content should be interactive to keep students engaged. It is crucial to create engaging content to ensure the successful assimilation of knowledge. To create interactive and engaging video

content, teachers can use various software applications such as Edpuzzle, VideoNotes, Youtube Video Editor, TED Ed, Blubbr, etc. These tools are wonderful and support teachers in the teaching-learning process.

Use blogs and wikis to create space for learners

There is a good advantage to having a participatory space for learners in **Blogger, Edublog, Wikispace, WordPress, Weebly, Kidblog,** etc. There is huge academic content on these blogs and wikis to learn and teach and encourage the learners to acquire knowledge voluntarily. Many blogs and wikis are exceptionally good and post standard content on their pages or sometimes, links are given to reach the sources of the content.

Use social media to create and join personal learning networks (PLNs)

There are always two sides to everything. Good and bad exist in every situation. However, if we focus solely on the positive aspects, we can learn a lot from social networking sites like LinkedIn, which is a professional platform that allows anyone to connect with others in their field or specific interest groups. Other social networking sites include Twitter, Google Plus, and Facebook. Through these Personal Learning Networks (PLNs), we can gain valuable insights from people all over the world who may have different or similar academic backgrounds.

Create unconventional quizzes and digital portfolios

Creating quizzes using traditional methods can often turn learners off. They are more interested in experiencing new and engaging ways of learning, especially assessment. That's why there are various digital tools available to help teachers create interesting quizzes, such as Riddle, Testmoz, QuizBean, Quizalize, and FlipQuiz.

Digital portfolios are also essential as they motivate and encourage learners to become independent in their learning. They bring a sense of self-responsibility to learners and allow for continuous assessment of their progress. Some popular digital portfolio tools include Seesaw, Google Sites, and Weebly.

1. Google Sites

Creating a digital portfolio using Google Sites is a simple process. The drag-and-drop feature makes it easy for students to insert various types of content, such as text, images, calendars, YouTube videos, and maps, quickly and efficiently. You can choose from one of the pre-designed themes or create a custom one to match your preferences. Once you have completed your portfolio, you can either publish it for public access or restrict it to certain individuals.

2. Artsonia

This is a secure platform designed to provide a safe learning environment for students to display their digital creativity. Teachers, classmates, and family members can view and offer feedback on the projects. The platform is user-friendly and seamlessly integrates with Google Classroom. Additionally, it includes a comprehensive teachers' guide to aid in the process.

3. ClassDojo

It is a free safe and easy-to-use platform, which helps learners to share their assignments, create and submit photos and videos.

4. Sway

This is a free multimedia presentation tool that students can use to upload, share, and export projects and schoolwork. It is Integrated with the Microsoft Office suite.

5. Pathbrite

It is easy, and free for teachers and learners to create digital portfolios with Pathbrite. Students can present their work, and teachers can manage and assess classes.

6. Silk

Creating web pages on a particular topic is completely free. Teachers and students can collaborate by sharing and collecting study materials and write-ups directly on these web pages. The web pages help to organize the study materials into various collections and sub-collections, such as documents, videos, images, charts, graphs, and links to other relevant sites.

7. Weebly

It is easy to share resources with learners. It has drag and drop interface, which can create documents and files easily, and teachers can add multimedia, photos, and graphics to their pages.

8. Seesaw

It is a learner-driven digital portfolio, which allows learners to independently document what they are learning in class.

Conclusion

As we move towards a more digital world, it is becoming increasingly important for teachers to be equipped with digital skills to ensure universal accessibility of knowledge. In this article, we have identified several digital tools that can be used to teach lessons effectively. Most of these tools are free and user-friendly, making it easy for teachers to incorporate them into their teaching strategies. We have identified seven essential digital skills that all teachers should have, regardless of the academic level they teach. These skills include creating written texts, videos, and other materials that cater to the interests of their students. By using these digital tools, teachers can make their presentations more dynamic, interactive, and effective, as well as explore alternative methods of evaluation. By embracing these digital skills, teachers can help their students better absorb and retain knowledge.

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