Sarah Smith July 2022

What do teachers of digital literacy do, and what can we learn from them?

Part of my EdD thesis from the University of Sheffield

My interest in digital literacies

Questions about the dissonance of what we teach and what we observe

Importance in English

Research questions

What do digital literacy practices look like in the classroom?

How are teachers defining digital literacies in their classrooms?

What are their motivations for teaching digital literacies?

How can ITE tutors support student teachers to teach digital literacy?

Methodology and methods: Original Plan

- Multi -case study
  - Interviews in school – photo elicitation
  - Observations of teachers and children
  - Scrutiny of children's work

Methodology and methods: Covid Plan

- Multi -case Study
  - Online photo elicitation interviews
  - Teachers own writing
  - Scrutiny of planning

Participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Number of years teaching	Current year group	Area teaching in
Alex	M	12	1	Kent
David	M	9	1	Sheffield
Joe	M	4	3	London
Niamh	F	7	3	London
Mark	M	3	4	Kent
Fran	F	28	6	Aberdeen

Defining digital literacies

"More than a set of skills and competencies; they are productive and meaningful practices that involve playful engagement, collaboration, criticality, affect and embodiment. They involve dispositions that serve to locate us in relation to others and within the social spaces that we occupy" Dowdall and Burnett (2021;6).

"Digital Literacy is the awareness, attitude and ability of individuals to appropriately use digital tools and facilities to identify, access, manage, integrate, evaluate, analyse and synthesize digital resources, construct new knowledge, create media expressions, and communicate with others, in the context of specific life situations, in order to enable constructive social action; and to reflect upon this process (Martin, 2006: 19).

Defining digital literacies —my attempt

- *socially situated practices that involve both the consumption and production of dynamic multimodal texts. Practices include meaningful, collaborative, critical engagement with texts that develop dispositions that help children to situate themselves within the social spaces that they will encounter. They are complex skills that involve social and emotional practices.*

Why teaching digital literacies is important

- Study takes a social approach to literacy it is important to take into consideration the knowledge and experiences that children bring from home.

- The changing nature of texts that children engage with at home, needs to be recognised within the classroom (Snyder *et al.*;2002, Carrington; 2005, Marsh; 2010, Marsh *et al.* ; 2017, Burnett and Merchant; 2018).

- Within the English context Marsh *et al.* (2017:48) state that from birth, children are immersed in "media and technology rich environment(s)". They argue that many young children come to school with a wide range of digital skills and are active users of technology, parents support this and feel that these competences are an essential part of growing up in the digital age.

The curriculum

- The current English education system considers literacy to be an autonomous model with aims and objectives that are reminiscent of the nineteenth century curriculum (Potter, 2013; Dowdall,2009).

- The New Labour design for a curriculum for the 21st century in the late 1990s was "surprisingly conservative" (Burnett *et al.*, 2014:6) good and basic skills were frequently mentioned but there is no reference to new literacies. The Primary National Strategy (2006) did include reference to the use of film and multimodal texts but these were removed when the curriculum was revised in 2013.

The curriculum

In Key Stage 1

- "use technology purposefully to create, organise, store, manipulate and retrieve digital content"

- "use technology safely and respectfully, keeping personal information private; identify where to go for help and support when they have concerns about content or contact on the internet or other online technologies".

In Key stage Two they are in addition, expected to

- "Understand computer networks, including the internet; how they can provide multiple services, such as the World Wide Web, and the opportunities they offer for communication and collaboration".

- "Use search technologies effectively, appreciate how results are selected and ranked, and be discerning in evaluating digital content use technology safely, respectfully and responsibly; recognise acceptable/unacceptable behaviour; identify a range of ways to report concerns about content and contact" (DfE, 2013: accessed online March 2022).

Analysis - approaches

Narratives

Themes across the cases

Key findings – motivations

What were the teachers' motivations for teaching digital literacy?

- Realise the importance in children's current and future lives

- Teachers recognise the importance of preparing children for jobs that are not yet created and that being confident in digital literacy is important for engaging with the world in everyday life

- Teachers are aware that many children come to school familiar with using digital literacies and the significance of recognising this in class is acknowledged. Integrating digital literacies into classroom practice is also considered to encourage creativity and problem solving within the class

Key findings- the practice

What do digital literacy practices look like in the classroom?

- Digital literacy is embedded in English teaching

- Film is used extensively

- There is freedom of choice for teachers and children

- Working collaboratively is encouraged

- Children's digital literacy skills are built upon

- Teachers actively search for CPD and apps

Recommendations

Digital Literacy needs to be included in the National Curriculum for English

Digital Leaders and spreading good practice

Learning from the lockdown

Integrate into ITE so it is seen as part of everyday practice

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