

The Role of Social Science Teacher Education in Combating Digital Misinformation Among Future Teachers: A Review

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Abstract

In today's world of misinformation and fake news, social science teachers must address the challenges of promoting democratic citizenship. The authors offer a five-part action plan for integrating media literacy into social science teacher education, based on the Teacher Education Technology Competencies (TETCs). The plan includes connecting media literacy to the purpose of social science teacher education, exploring the history of fake news in the US, tracing the history of journalism and journalistic ethics, analyzing current examples of fake news, and developing efficacy in working with it. Research indicates that a diverse approach to media literacy can assist students in developing civic online thinking, navigating political bias, and participating in online civic activities. To promote media literacy among social science teacher educators should enhance their own ability to navigate social media, new media, and other sources of information. Additionally, media literacy should be integrated into teacher education programs on a regular basis.

Keywords: Social science; Fake news; Action plan; Media literacy.

1. INTRODUCTION

Digitization is causing societal change in many areas of society. Digital technology offer potential for innovation in several processes. However, these opportunities also bring challenges. One difficulty people face is the continual exposure to unfiltered information. Individuals must develop their own frame of reference to understand and clarify information (Stalder et al., 2018). The current condition has led to the spread of misinformation, posing a huge risk to society, especially during times of crisis (Mehta et al., 2021; Austin et al., 2020).

Our goal is to equip future teachers with effective ways for detecting and debunking misinformation in various circumstances, and to teach these skills to their students. This project provided opportunities for future instructors to learn about detecting and dispelling misinformation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Schools aim to provide students with self-determination and critical thinking abilities, enabling them to negotiate daily problems and opportunities. The sustainable development goals (SDGs) aim to equip all pupils with the knowledge and skills needed for sustainable development by 2030. Critical thinking is essential for supporting sustainable development. To promote sustainable development, education should focus on developing critical thinking skills when assessing information from various sources. A critical approach helps students make informed decisions about global problems and emergencies, including pandemics, and contribute to achieving SDGs.

To help students build critical information literacy skills and spot disinformation, teachers should be conversant with critical evaluation approaches for online and analog media. The emancipatory approach to education for sustainable development emphasizes cultivating a critical attitude for reading, analyzing, and evaluating information, rather than imposing personal ideas and ideals on pupils (Bernsteiner et al., 2023).

1.1 The importance of Media Literacy for Social Science Teachers

Concerns about fake news and a lack of media literacy among adults and adolescents have led to a renewed focus on integrating media literacy, civic media literacy, and civics. Proponents of these approaches aim to assist students evaluate the authenticity of online information and utilize media with civic intentionality and democratic values. Critical media literacy involves analyzing content and identifying biases in multimodal texts.

Social science teachers that integrate media literacy promote critical thinking and evaluate the sociocultural contexts in which media is generated. Social science teachers equip students with essential media literacy skills to succeed in today's civic life. The National council for the

social studies (NCSS) defines media literacy as “essential skills for active citizenship in our democracy” and incorporates it into social science education (Manfra and Holmes, 2020).

2. Media Literacy Challenges in Teacher Education

Preservice teachers are enthusiastic about incorporating media literacy into their lessons, but they struggle to put it into practice. For instance, Schmeichel et al. (2018) found that students teachers showed a noticeable lack of confidence in their capacity to teach media literacy, even in the face of consistent and cooperative instructional preparation in their teacher education program. The lack of media literacy in the school curriculum (Mason et al., 2018) and standardized curriculum (Stoddard, 2014) makes it difficult for teacher candidates to match news media assignments with course material. However, it seems that preservice teachers frequently lack prior experience with media literacy, particularly if it was not covered in their own secondary schooling (Meehan et al., 2015). Felini (2014) developed five criteria for evaluating the quality of media literacy activities: instructional techniques, actors, organization, underpinning education theories, and creativity. Factors beyond the teacher’s control, such as family involvement, media professional participation, and technology access, can hinder media literacy initiatives. Zhang Zhu, and Sang (2014) found that professional development and leadership support can help teachers overcome “stages of concern” while integrating media literacy.

These studies highlight elements beyond teachers’ control that may hamper their ability to integrate media literacy. Weninger et al. (2017) emphasized “the need for careful analysis of the complex interplay of factors, many beyond teachers’ immediate control, that ultimately shape what happens in classrooms” and suggested that “investigations of teachers’ role in media literacy education be conducted within a critical examination of institutional culture and broader policy priorities”. Social science education should cover evidence and argumentation. Teachers may be concerned about being characterized as ideologically biased if political leaders’ statements contradict evidence-based norms. This is the reality of teaching social science today.

3. Action Plan: Including Media Literacy in Social Science Education

Here's a plan for integrating media literacy into social science teacher education. The plan for Teacher Education Technology Competencies (TETCs) is based on a study of current literature on media literacy. Social science teachers can integrate media literacy by following five steps (Manfra and Holmes, 2020).

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Step 1: Align media literacy with social science teaching objectives (TETC 2.a).

Step 2: Research the history of fake news in the United States (TETC 2.a).

Step 3: Examine the history of journalism (TETC 2.a, 9).

Step 4: Examine recent examples of fake news (TETC 2.a, 9).

Step 5: Use effective techniques to detect fake news and misinformation (TETC 2.a, 9).

4. CONCLUSIONS

This review article focused on the action plan which indicated that social science educators can help preservice teachers develop their own and their students' media literacy skills. Media literacy is relevant to social science education, but it has not been actively integrated into teacher education. This action plan is a starting point for incorporating media literacy into social science teacher education. The program emphasizes media literacy, analyses fake news, promotes journalist ethics, and outlines tools for studying transmedia.

Every indication suggests that misinformation and fake news will continue to confront American political systems. To educate democratic citizens, social science educators must promote media literacy among future instructors and students. Future research should focus on media literacy among social science educators and experienced teachers. Understanding the diverse experiences of social science teachers allows us to tailor the action plan to their specific needs. Educators and researchers must examine the structural and contextual variables that limit instructors'

productivity. This review paper will challenge us to think critically about our roles as information consumers and producers in the Web 2.0 age.

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