

Virtual space as living environment, need for digital life literacy



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O P I N I O N

With the expansion of knowledge and technology in social life, the virtual sphere has taken on a new meaning and status. It is no longer peripheral; it has moved directly into the lived environment of human beings. A space with such a broad and diverse range of services, capabilities, and modes of interaction, and one that enables people to live on a virtual platform, naturally demands to be understood and learned. To exist meaningfully in the digital world, people must consciously define a way of life for it.

From this perspective, the essential competencies required for living well online can be described as digital life literacy. We have to acknowledge that when knowledge and technology evolve, when a space called the virtual world comes into being, human lifestyles must evolve alongside that transformation.

Contemporary individuals, in order to live with technology and engage effectively in digital life, need a specific set of capacities and know-how. They need a framework for virtual living that allows them to manage their digital lives

responsibly and intelligently: A blend of knowledge, awareness, ethics, critical understanding, and social insight that can guide today's connected human within the digital ecosystem. Digital life literacy, then, is the sum total of what we need to learn in order to live properly in the virtual space. But before learning how to live digitally, we must first define and understand the virtual space itself, accurately and deeply. This means moving beyond a purely instrumental view of the digital world toward a human-centered lens. The virtual space is not merely a technological upgrade; it is a life-shaping environment. It has the power to influence thought patterns, behavior, emotions, ethics, identity, and personality, and to reshape society and the world at large. Something with such reach and impact must be read carefully and understood correctly.

When we talk about digital life literacy, and when we extend it to encompass social life as a whole and recognize it as a core necessity of modern living, we are essentially accepting that as capabilities and services scale up, lifestyles must follow suit. When progress happens, lifestyles must be recalibrated accordingly.

Developing a lifestyle that aligns with transformation and progress means cultivating a literacy that keeps human beings in step with change. Technology



People gather around a table, each absorbed in their smartphones, illustrating the growing ubiquity of mobile device use in daily social settings.  IRNA

alone should not advance; the way we live with technology must advance as well.

This is precisely why the virtual space, as a product of technological progress, requires structured understanding and deliberate learning. It calls for an educational framework, digital life literacy,

that allows a culture of living with technology to take shape in parallel with technological growth.

Ultimately, the purpose of digital life literacy is to articulate the need for a form of applied, ethics-driven knowledge, one that ensures the virtual space transforms human life in constructive

ways. The goal is for technology to support and serve us, rather than harm us; to help build a digital world that is healthy, humane, and genuinely enriching.

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When memorization replaces meaningful learning



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O P I N I O N

The education system is the backbone of any society's development. A country's system of education not only plays a decisive role in its scientific and economic advancement, but also shapes the cultural, social, and moral identity of future generations.

In Iran, the education system has unfortunately been grappling with a wide range of challenges for years, largely as a result of misguided or flawed policy-making by ineffective administrators. These challenges stem from weak policy design, short-term and ad hoc decision-making, and the poor execution of reform agendas, all of which have inflicted serious quantitative and qualitative damage. That said, the government under President Masoud Pezeshkian, and given his stated commitment to education and educational equity, a critical window of opportunity has opened up to undertake a fundamental reassessment and steer the education system toward a brighter future.

The first and most fundamental problem in Iran's education system is its heavy reliance on rote memorization. While the rest of the world is pivoting toward cultivating critical thinking, creativity, and entrepreneurship, our system remains locked into memory-based learning. Iranian students are overwhelmingly bombarded with large volumes of theoretical information that rarely translate into real-world utility. This approach not only drags down educational productivity, but also severs the link between what students learn and the actual needs of society. Educational inequality is another major fault line in this landscape.

The stark disparity in educational resources across different regions, particularly between urban and rural schools,

has meant that many students in underprivileged areas are effectively shut out of quality, standards-based education. Public schools are struggling with inadequate facilities, non-specialist teachers, and weak infrastructure, while private schools, backed by hefty tuition fees, offer resources on par with international standards. This educational gap not only calls the very notion of equity into question, but also shapes, and often limits, students' academic and career trajectories.

At the same time, teachers' livelihoods and professional standing within Iran's education system remain deeply unsatisfactory. Teachers, as the cornerstone of education and human development, have long been burdened by economic hardship. The partial and ineffective rollout of the teacher ranking system, insufficient salary increases, and the absence of robust professional development programs have all chipped away at teacher motivation and classroom quality. In many developed countries, teachers rank among well-paid professionals with high social status; in Iran, by contrast, financial pressures have pushed many teachers to take on second and even third jobs, a reality that directly undermines the quality of instruction.

Another critical challenge is the weak alignment between the education system and labor market needs. While many countries reverse-engineer their education policies based on economic and industrial demand, Iran's system continues to privilege purely academic tracks, leaving technical, vocational, and entrepreneurial skills on the sidelines. As a result, many school and university graduates enter the job market without the competencies employers are looking for, ultimately fueling higher unemployment rates.

Addressing these challenges requires a deep, systemic overhaul of national education policy. The first step is to shift gears from a memorization-driven model to a skills-based framework. Curricula must be redesigned to strengthen

students' critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving capabilities. Leveraging modern educational technologies, updating teaching methodologies, and trimming down excessive and low-value content are among the measures that can significantly boost learning outcomes.

Closing the educational equity gap also demands targeted government intervention. Channeling more resources toward schools in disadvantaged areas, upgrading public schools with modern facilities, recruiting qualified teachers nationwide, and leveling the playing field in access to educational opportunities can all help narrow socioeconomic divides within the system. Elevating the status of teachers and improving their living conditions must likewise be treated as top-tier priorities.

The fair and rigorous implementation of the teacher ranking system, meaningful increases in salaries and benefits, continuous training programs to enhance instructional quality, and policies aimed at rebuilding teacher motivation are all steps that can restore this profession's

standing within the education system. Ultimately, Iran's education system must be brought into sync with the country's economic and industrial realities. Expanding technical and vocational education, scaling up skills-based and entrepreneurial tracks, and forging closer ties between schools and the labor market can produce graduates who are job-ready and socially adaptive.

Iran's education system is at a critical crossroads. Without bold and evidence-based reforms, the gap between education and societal needs will only widen. The Iranian administration now has a rare chance to roll out precise, science-driven policies that can fundamentally transform the education system and put it on a path toward sustainable development. Reforming education is not merely an urgent demand—it is a vital necessity for Iran's future, one that we hope will be realized with the strong backing of the president.

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Iran's education system remains trapped in rote memorization, failing to equip students with critical thinking and practical skills needed for real-world challenges.



Schoolchildren attend a class at a primary school in an undated photograph.

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