

Developing Functional Literacy in Primary School Students Through Integrated Methods

A.A.Urazimbetova

Associate Professor, PhD, Profy Univercity, Uzbekistan

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Abstract: This article highlights the importance of developing functional literacy in primary school students. It presents both theoretical foundations and practical recommendations on how to enhance students' knowledge and skills through integrated approaches. These approaches aim to improve the effectiveness of education, ensure interdisciplinary connections, and strengthen students' ability to independently solve real-life problems.

Keywords: Functional literacy, integrated approach, primary education, interdisciplinary connection, practical skills.

Introduction: In the current era of globalization, there is an increasing demand for human capital quality, particularly in terms of education quality and its practical effectiveness. From this perspective, the primary education system should not only build students' knowledge base but also teach them to make informed decisions in daily life, express their thoughts coherently, and analyze information. This is directly related to the concept of functional literacy.

Functional literacy is not merely the ability to recognize letters and read; it involves applying acquired knowledge in real-life situations, working with information, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. Utilizing integrated methods is of urgent importance in developing such competencies.

Functional literacy refers to an individual's ability to effectively apply basic literacy skills such as reading, writing, and arithmetic in daily life activities, social interactions, information processing, and analysis. This term was first widely introduced into scientific discourse in the second half of the 20th century by UNESCO and other international organizations.

In scientific sources, functional literacy is described as

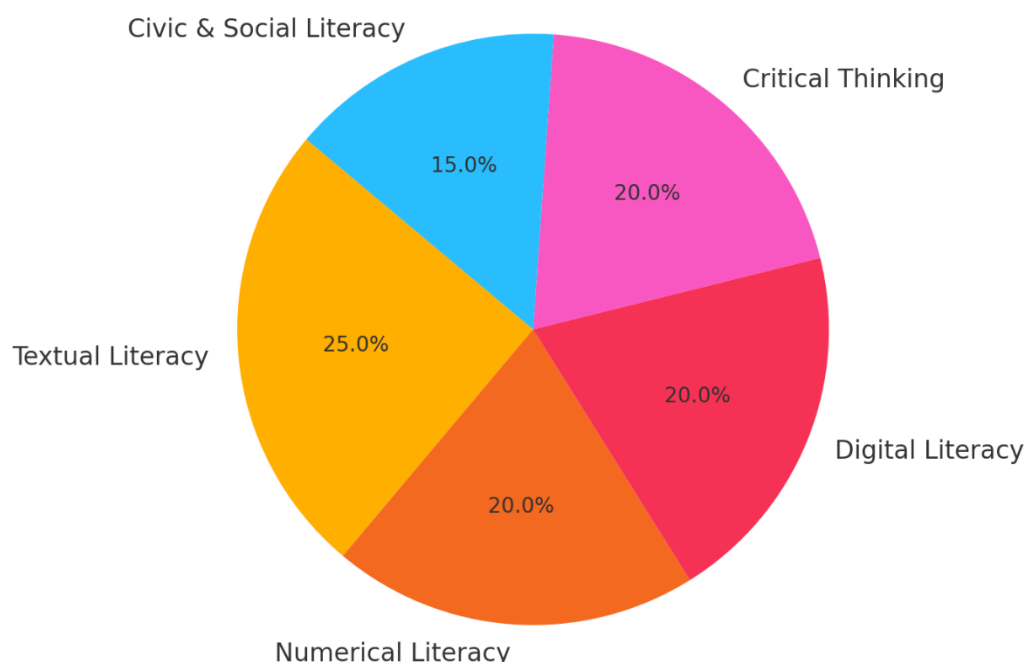
"an individual's capacity to independently solve problems based on information, engage in communication within a social environment, and tackle everyday tasks autonomously" (OECD, 2019). This form of literacy extends beyond theoretical knowledge, emphasizing the flexible application of that knowledge in practical contexts.

Academic literature identifies the following core components of functional literacy:

1. **Textual literacy** – the ability to understand, interpret, and evaluate different types of texts.
2. **Numerical literacy** – the ability to analyze numerical data and draw conclusions from it.
3. **Information and digital literacy** – the conscious use of technologies and information tools.
4. **Critical thinking and problem-solving skills.**
5. **Socio-cultural and civic literacy.**

Thus, functional literacy is a comprehensive set of skills that contributes to the development of a well-rounded, active, independent, and socially adaptable individual.

Components of Functional Literacy



The concept of functional literacy lies at the heart of modern pedagogy and educational strategies. Educational theorists such as V.S. Lednev, Z.Kh. Nazarova, and John Dewey evaluate the effectiveness of education not only by the assimilation of knowledge but also by its application in practice and relevance to real-life situations.

Development of functional literacy in primary education:

- **forms the basis of the principle of personality-oriented education;**
- **Accelerates the student's socialization process;**
- **Strengthens the foundations of creative and critical thinking;**
- **Creates the basis for future competitiveness in the labor market;**
- **Allows high results in international assessment systems (PISA, PIRLS).**

International experience shows that the formation of functional literacy from an early age requires a comprehensive approach at the stages of preschool and primary education. In developed countries, this literacy is defined as a central element of curricula.

In the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated January 28, 2022 No. UP-60 "Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan for 2022-2026," the development of functional literacy, the training of students according to PISA and other international programs has been raised to the level of state policy.

Functional literacy is a set of practical skills that prepare a modern individual to apply knowledge to real-life situations. It is a strategic educational direction that should be continuously developed, starting from primary education. From a scientific perspective, this literacy is not only an indicator of one's knowledge level but also a measure of personal development, problem-solving ability, and social engagement.

In modern education, the integrated approach is being formed as one of the important methodological principles of the pedagogical process. This approach serves the formation of students' knowledge, skills, and competencies in a holistic, integral system. Integrated education is the process of providing knowledge based on the natural connection between various disciplines, types of activities, or forms of teaching.

The main goal of the integrated approach is the formation of the student's ability to apply the acquired

knowledge in practical activities, adapting it to real-life situations. This approach, unlike teaching separately in traditional subjects, develops in students a holistic worldview, logical thinking, and the ability to solve problems comprehensively by ensuring interdisciplinary connections.

From a scientific point of view, the integrated approach can be explained as follows:

1. Thematic approach - the combination of different disciplines within the framework of one topic. For example, the topic "Nature and Us" can be studied together through the subjects of native language, biology, and art.

2. Methodological approach - combining different disciplines through the same didactic methods (project, problem-based learning, research).

3. Organizational approach - joint organization of lessons in cooperation with teachers, comprehensive planning of extracurricular activities.

Pedagogical research (Fogarty, 1991; Dewey, 1938; Nazarova, 2020) shows that through an integrated approach, students better assimilate knowledge, analyze it independently, and are able to adapt to new situations. This approach is also an effective tool for improving students' functional literacy.

At the stage of primary education, the integrated approach is especially relevant, since during this period, students perceive the surrounding world as a whole. By showing interdisciplinary connections and connecting lessons, they form a holistic understanding of nature, society, art, mathematics, and technology.

The advantages of the integrated approach are:

1. Forms deep and stable knowledge in students;
2. Develops critical and creative thinking;
3. Indicates interdisciplinary connections and brings them closer to practice;
4. Increases motivation and interest in learning;
5. Forms functional skills corresponding to real life.

An integrated approach is a necessity of modern education, which serves to form students' ability to think comprehensively, participate socially actively, and solve problems in life. Especially in primary grades, the educational process, organized on the basis of this approach, plays an important role in the development of functional literacy.

Integrated methods for the development of functional literacy:

1. Project-based learning. Students create projects on topics relevant to them. In this process, they use such subjects as mathematics, native language, and natural

science. For example, in the project "Environmental Problems in My Neighborhood," students:

- collection of statistical information (mathematics),
- search for information and write text (native language),
- environmental studies (natural science),
- acquire skills to make proposals for waste recycling (creative thinking).

2. Conducting lessons based on interdisciplinary integration. For example, the topic "Water is the source of life" can be combined with mathematics (calculation of water consumption), natural science (water circulation), native language (reading and writing texts about water), music (songs about water).

3. Role-playing games and problem situations. Through problem situations, students enter a role in real life and acquire functional skills such as decision-making, problem-solving, and interaction with others.

In young children, figurative thinking, understanding through action, and learning through play predominate. Therefore, integrated methods do not bore the reader and arouse interest. In addition, tasks given through various means (visual materials, audio, video, interactive games) serve to further strengthen functional literacy.

The development of functional literacy is one of the priorities of modern education. Especially in primary grades, the formation of these skills determines the foundation of the future educational process. Integrated approaches are an effective tool in this regard, helping students develop as individuals who are adaptable to real life, think critically, and can apply knowledge in practice.

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