



NURTURING DIGITAL LITERACY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

In today's fast changing digital world, higher education institutions are under pressing demand to promote digital literacy among the students. Integrating digital literacy across a wide range of curricula, using free access to educational materials, organising digital literacy workshops, testing digital competences, and building technology-enhanced learning environments are some of the thrust areas that higher educational institutions should concentrate. This all-encompassing programme guarantees that students are adequately equipped to address the myriad difficulties of the digital era by emphasising the need for fostering a culture of digital learning and continual innovation. This research paper aims at exploring the need for inculcating digital literacy skills among the students and how the digital literacy helps to boost the confident level of the students.

Keywords: Digital Literacy, Higher Education, Digital Skills.

1. Introduction

Higher education institutions serve as beacons of knowledge and empowerment in an era where the digital sphere intertwines with almost every aspect of our lives. They are tasked with cultivating a critical talent that has become the lifeblood of modern success. As the lines between the real and digital worlds grow increasingly blurred, the capacity to navigate, utilise, and survive in this complicated digital frontier has become more than an advantage, but a necessity. This urgency is realised within the sacred halls of higher education, as colleges and universities embark on a quest to provide students with the essential digital skills required to thrive in an ever-changing world.

The path to encourage digital literacy in higher education is multifaceted. It encompasses the integration of digital competencies, faculty development in technology integration, access to abundant digital resources, and the delivery of digital literacy workshops. It also includes developing technology-enhanced learning settings, cultivating collaborations with industry experts, arranging mentoring programmes, and remaining constantly tuned in to the dynamic rhythm of technological trends. It's an avenue that not only prepares students for the digital era, but also develops a culture of constant learning, creativity, and flexibility.

1.1 Digital Literacy Initiatives in Higher Education

- a) **Digital Integration across Curricula:** Higher education institutions are increasingly integrating digital literacy into their academic programmes. This integration goes beyond individual courses, with assignments, projects, and activities geared to nurture digital skills and critical thinking across disciplines. As a result, students gain practical digital abilities that are applicable to a wide range of professional circumstances.
- b) **Technology Integration and Faculty Development:** It is a pre-requisite to ensure that faculty members have become adept in digital technologies and pedagogies. Institutions provide training programmes and tools to help educators improve their digital literacy. This enables teachers to successfully incorporate technology into their teaching techniques, enhancing the learning experience of students in the digital era.
- c) **Accessible Digital Resources:** With a view to promote digital literacy, institutions make online libraries, databases, and applications easily accessible. This accessibility guarantees that students have the resources they need to engage with digital information, do research, and keep themselves abreast of the changes.



- d) **Embracing Open Educational Resources:** Colleges and universities are increasingly pressing for the use of Open Educational Resources (OERs). These low-cost alternatives to traditional textbooks not only relieve students' financial concerns, but also offer them with up-to-date digital learning resources, linking education with the digital world.
- e) **Continuous Learning and Industry Engagement:** The process of getting students ready for the digital age extends beyond the classroom. Institutions promote digital literacy by inviting industry professionals to provide guest lectures, forming internship relationships with major organisations, and developing mentorship programmes. These programmes bridge the gap between academics and real-world digital practises, ensuring that graduates are well-prepared to handle the digital competencies.

1.2 Review of Literature

Shahrokh Nikou, & Milla Aavakare (2021), in their study on “An assessment of the interplay between literacy and digital Technology in Higher Education”, stated that higher education is being forced more and more to abandon antiquated teaching strategies that are inappropriate for environments where education is changing quickly. It is found that there is significant differences between professors and students include the staff's increased utilisation of tablets and desktop computers. It concluded that, institutions that support staff and student holistic development indirectly improve their primary goals of teaching and learning.¹

Abid Haleema , Mohd Javaida, Mohd Asim Qadri, Rajiv Sumanc (2022), in their research “Understanding the role of digital technologies in education: A review “ revealed that digital technologies have a big impact on the educational system, allowing students to travel the world and see far-off places from the comfort of their laptops. It is found that digital technologies aim to minimise pollution and waste while boosting productivity and efficiency.²

Nia Kurniawati, Ilza Mayuni, and Ninuk Lustyantje (2022), “Diligent (Digital Literacy Agent) Nurturing English Future Teachers’ Competence in the Digital Era”, the study identified that, respondents shown a significant desire to share their knowledge on various digital literacy topics throughout classroom activities. They were confident in their increased knowledge and talents in the use of digital media in English education. It was also found that, this confidence and passion for gaining and distributing knowledge about using digital media in English instruction suggested that they may serve as role models or champions for digital literacy in their professional contexts.³

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The development of digital literacy among students is a significant problem that higher education institutions must overcome in the fast technology driven world. This study examines the state of digital literacy in higher education at present, institutional initiatives, and assesses their effectiveness. To reduce the digital literacy gap and better align higher education with the demands of the digital age, it aims at pinpointing the areas for improvement.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

1. To know the digital literacy initiatives taken by the higher education institutions.
2. To examine the monthly expenditure towards internet access.
3. To find out the efficacy of digital literacy training in boosting the confidence level of students.

1.5 Methodology

The primary data have been collected through the questionnaire by using Google form. The data have been collected from 120 respondents from five colleges in Salem city. The following tools were used for the study are Correlation and One-ay Anova.

1.6 Hypothesis



1. There is no significant correlation between family monthly income and monthly expenses spend towards internet access.
 2. There is no significant difference between opportunity to attend programmes in enhancing their digital literacy and their level of confidence towards their digital literacy skills.
- 2. Analysis and Interpretation**

Table 2.1

Correlation between family monthly income and monthly expenses towards internet access.

Correlations			
		Family Monthly Income	Expenditure
Family Monthly Income	Pearson Correlation	1	.069
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.453
	N	120	120
Expenditure	Pearson Correlation	.069	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.453	
	N	120	120

Since, there is a moderate correlation between the students' family monthly income and their monthly spending towards internet access. Hence we reject the null hypothesis.

Table 2.2

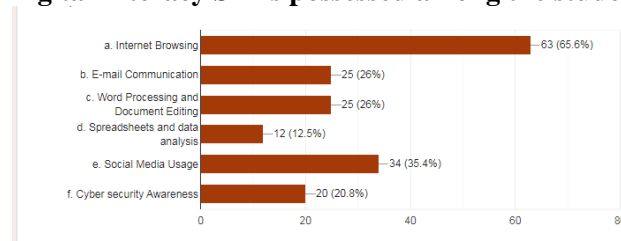
Opportunity in enhancing their digital literacy and their level of confidence towards their digital literacy skills

ANOVA					
Confidence Level					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.975	1	1.975	1.850	.176
Within Groups	125.991	118	1.068		
Total	127.967	119			

Since, the p value is more than 0.05, we accept the null hypothesis. Hence it is evident that there is no significant difference between opportunity to attend programmes in enhancing their digital literacy and their level of confidence towards their digital literacy skills.

Chart 2.3

Digital Literacy Skills possessed among the students





Results

- ✦ Maximum of (43.3) percent of the respondents belong to the age group of 18 – 20 years.
- ✦ Majority (52.5) percent of the respondents are female.
- ✦ Majority (63.3) percent of the respondents are undergraduates.
- ✦ Maximum of (42.5) percent of the respondents' family monthly income was upto Rs. 20,000.
- ✦ Majority (50) percent of the respondents are under graduates.
- ✦ 48.3 percent of the respondents believe that digital literacy is essential for success in higher education.
- ✦ Majority of (55.8) percent of the respondents are aware of the use of open educational resources.
- ✦ Majority of (82.5) percent of the respondents had the opportunity to attend guest lectures and workshops conducted as part of the curriculum in enriching their digital skills.
- ✦ Maximum of (65.6) percent of the respondents are good at internet browsing, followed by social media usage.
- ✦ Maximum of (76.7) percent of the respondents witnessed the efforts of the institution in providing the digital literacy training to their faculty.
- ✦ 40.8 percent of the respondents' monthly expenditure towards internet access ranged between Rs. 100 – 200.
- ✦ Maximum of (40) percent of the respondents feel moderately confident towards their digital literacy skills.
- ✦ Maximum of (40.8) percent of the respondents feel highly satisfied toward the digital literacy components present in their higher education curriculum.
- ✦ There is a moderate correlation between the students' family monthly income and their monthly spending towards internet access.
- ✦ There is no significant difference between opportunity to attend programmes in enhancing their digital literacy and their level of confidence towards their digital literacy skills.

Recommendations

- ✦ Integrate digital literacy in an array of courses through assignments, projects, and activities that promote both digital skills and critical thinking.
- ✦ Provide faculty with digital literacy training and encourage the successful incorporation of technology into their teaching strategies.
- ✦ Encourage the usage of low-cost open educational resources to relieve students' financial constraints while providing great digital learning tools.
- ✦ To support digital education, make investments in user-friendly, open-access learning settings with technological integration, especially online platforms.
- ✦ By keeping tie up with industrialists will facilitate the students to enhance the digital skills.
- ✦ Keep up with new technological developments, and periodically update courses to reflect the rapidly changing digital environment to better prepare students.
- ✦ Promote a culture of continuous digital learning and innovation, encouraging students to explore and experiment with new technologies beyond the classroom.
- ✦ Regularly collect student feedback on digital literacy initiatives to drive improvements and enhancements within the institution.

Conclusion

Fostering digital literacy in higher education is of utmost importance for the successful growth of students' career. The key phases include integrating ICT across the curriculum, enhancing the digital skills of the teacher, and assuring easy access to digital resources. It is found that the



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students' family monthly income influences their monthly spending towards internet access. Students' experiences are enhanced via technology-enhanced learning, industry connections and mentorship. Therefore, cultivating a digital learning culture, obtaining feedback, and adjusting to changing technology will definitely help to provide students with the necessary digital skills. Hence higher education institutions should adopt these digital technologies for academic and career success of the students.

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