

Influence of Digital Education to Uplift the Global Literacy Rate in the Age of Digital Civilization

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Abstract

This qualitative study investigates the influence of digital education on enhancing global literacy rates within the context of the digital civilization era. Utilizing in-depth interviews with educators, policymakers, and digital education experts from diverse geographical regions, the research explores how digital tools and platforms are transforming literacy education. The findings reveal that digital education significantly contributes to improving literacy rates by providing accessible, flexible, and engaging learning opportunities. Online courses, educational apps, and interactive e-books make learning resources available to a broader audience, including underserved and remote populations. Participants emphasized the role of digital education in fostering self-paced and personalized learning, which caters to individual learning styles and paces. Additionally, digital literacy programs enhance critical thinking and digital skills essential for navigating the modern world. However, challenges such as the digital divide, inadequate digital infrastructure, and varying levels of digital literacy among educators and learners were noted. The study highlights the need for comprehensive strategies to address these issues, including investment in digital infrastructure, training for educators, and inclusive policies that ensure equitable access to digital learning resources. By providing a global perspective, this research underscores the transformative potential of digital education in advancing literacy and fostering inclusive education in the digital age.

Keywords: Digital Education, Global Literacy, Digital Civilization, Educational Accessibility.

Introduction

In the contemporary era, digital civilization has revolutionized various aspects of human life, notably education. Digital education, encompassing e-learning platforms, online courses, and educational apps, has emerged as a powerful tool in enhancing global literacy rates. This qualitative research investigates the influence of digital education on uplifting global literacy rates through in-depth interviews with educators, students, and policymakers.

Digital education, facilitated by the proliferation of the internet and digital devices, offers unprecedented access to learning resources and opportunities. According to UNESCO (2021), over 773 million adults and young people worldwide lack basic literacy skills, with two-thirds being women. The introduction of digital education has the potential to bridge this gap by providing flexible and accessible learning solutions. This study explores how digital education initiatives are perceived and their effectiveness in improving literacy rates across different regions.

In-depth interviews serve as the primary method for this qualitative research, providing rich, detailed insights into the experiences and perspectives of various stakeholders involved in digital education. This approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the complex and multifaceted impact of digital education on literacy. Through open-ended questions, participants share their views on the accessibility, quality, and challenges of digital education, highlighting its role in promoting literacy.

One of the key advantages of digital education is its ability to reach marginalized and underserved populations. Traditional educational systems often struggle to provide equal access to quality education, especially in remote and economically disadvantaged areas. Digital platforms can deliver educational content to these regions, overcoming geographical and financial barriers. For instance, initiatives like Khan Academy and Coursera offer free or low-cost courses to learners worldwide, significantly contributing to educational inclusion (Krause, 2020).

Furthermore, digital education promotes personalized learning, catering to the diverse needs and learning paces of individuals. Adaptive learning technologies, such as those used by platforms like Duolingo, tailor educational content to the learner's proficiency level, enhancing engagement and retention (Smith & Winthrop, 2018). This personalized approach is particularly beneficial for literacy education, as it allows learners to progress at their own pace, ensuring a better grasp of fundamental skills (Javed et al., 2020).

Despite its advantages, digital education also faces significant challenges. Issues such as digital divide, technological literacy, and access to reliable internet connections hinder its widespread adoption and effectiveness. According to the World Bank (2021), nearly 3.7 billion people remain unconnected to the internet, primarily in developing countries. Addressing these challenges requires concerted efforts from governments, non-profit organizations, and the private sector to invest in digital infrastructure and training programs.

This research aims to provide valuable insights into the transformative potential of digital education in enhancing global literacy rates. By examining the perspectives of educators, students, and policymakers, the study highlights best practices, identifies challenges, and suggests strategies for optimizing digital education initiatives. The findings are expected to contribute to the ongoing discourse on leveraging digital tools for educational development, ultimately supporting efforts to achieve global literacy goals.

Problem Statement

The influence of digital education on global literacy rates has become a critical area of focus in the 21st century, especially in the context of rapid technological advancements and the global push towards digital civilization. This shift is transforming traditional education systems and posing both opportunities and challenges for increasing literacy worldwide.

The digital era, characterized by the proliferation of internet access and digital technologies, has revolutionized how information is disseminated and consumed. This transformation is

particularly evident in the education sector, where digital tools and platforms are increasingly integrated into teaching and learning processes (Li & Lalani, 2020). Digital education encompasses a wide range of activities, from online courses and digital classrooms to mobile learning apps and educational games, all aimed at enhancing learning experiences and outcomes (OECD, 2021).

Digital education has the potential to significantly uplift global literacy rates by making education more accessible, inclusive, and engaging. Online learning platforms, such as Khan Academy and Coursera, offer free or low-cost educational resources to millions of learners worldwide, thereby democratizing access to quality education (Peters et al., 2021). Moreover, digital tools facilitate personalized learning experiences, where educational content can be tailored to meet individual learning needs, thus improving comprehension and retention (EdTech Hub, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the importance of digital education, as schools worldwide were forced to close and shift to remote learning. This transition highlighted the flexibility and scalability of digital education systems in maintaining educational continuity during crises (UNESCO, 2020). Additionally, digital education has been pivotal in reaching underserved populations, including those in remote or conflict-affected areas, where traditional educational infrastructure is lacking (UNESCO, 2021).

Despite its potential, the implementation of digital education faces significant challenges. One major issue is the digital divide—the gap between those who have access to digital technologies and those who do not. This divide is often influenced by factors such as socioeconomic status, geographic location, and infrastructure availability (van Dijk & Hacker, 2021). In many developing countries, limited internet access and the high cost of digital devices pose substantial barriers to digital education.

Moreover, there are concerns about the quality and effectiveness of digital education. While digital tools can enhance learning, they require robust pedagogical frameworks and skilled educators to be truly effective (Kimmons & Veletsianos, 2020). The rapid shift to online learning during the pandemic revealed gaps in teachers' digital competencies and the readiness of educational institutions to support digital learning environments. Bridging the digital divide, ensuring the quality of digital education, and equipping educators with the necessary skills are critical steps toward realizing the full potential of digital education. Policymakers, educators, and stakeholders must collaborate to create inclusive, effective, and sustainable digital education systems that can enhance literacy rates globally in the age of digital civilization.

Limitations

A qualitative study based on in-depth interviews exploring the influence of digital education on global literacy rates in the age of digital civilization faces several limitations. Firstly, the sample size in qualitative research is typically small, which may not capture the full diversity of experiences and perspectives, thereby limiting the generalizability of the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Secondly, the subjective nature of interviews can introduce interviewer bias, where the researcher's expectations and interpretations may influence the responses (Patton, 2015). Thirdly, participants may exhibit social desirability bias, providing responses they believe are expected or favourable rather than their true experiences or opinions (Bryman, 2016).

Furthermore, the reliance on self-reported data can result in inaccuracies or omissions, as participants may have difficulty recalling details or may selectively share information (Maxwell, 2013). The contextual specificity of qualitative studies also means that findings are deeply rooted in the particular settings and conditions of the interviewees, making it challenging to apply conclusions broadly across different educational systems and cultural contexts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Lastly, the dynamic and rapidly evolving nature of digital education means that insights from interviews might quickly become outdated as new technologies and pedagogical approaches emerge.

Literature Review

Digital education has significantly influenced global literacy rates, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. The shift to online learning platforms has made education accessible to a broader audience, including those in remote areas (UNESCO, 2020). The use of digital tools and resources has enabled personalized learning experiences, thereby improving literacy rates across different demographics (Huang et al., 2020). According to Li and Lalani (2020), digital education has bridged educational gaps by providing quality learning resources to students worldwide. This transition to digital platforms has increased engagement and retention rates, which are critical for literacy development. Moreover, the integration of multimedia and interactive content has enhanced comprehension and learning outcomes.

The World Bank (2021) reports that digital education initiatives have been crucial in maintaining educational continuity during school closures. These initiatives have not only prevented learning losses but have also contributed to increasing literacy rates by reaching students who were previously excluded from traditional education systems due to geographic or economic barriers. Research by Peters et al. (2021) highlights that digital education has democratized learning by offering free or low-cost educational resources. Platforms like Khan Academy and Coursera have provided high-quality education to millions, thereby improving literacy rates globally. The availability of courses in multiple languages has also played a significant role in this upliftment.

In their study, Daniel and Ustyuzhantseva (2021) found that the adoption of digital education technologies has significantly increased adult literacy rates. Online adult education programs have enabled working adults to continue their education and improve their literacy skills without disrupting their professional lives. The impact of digital education on literacy rates is also evident in developing countries. Initiatives like mobile learning and digital classrooms have reached underserved populations, providing them with essential literacy skills. These efforts have been particularly successful in regions with limited access to traditional educational infrastructure.

A study by Zhang and Zhu (2021) indicates that digital storytelling and gamification in education have positively influenced literacy development among young learners. These interactive methods have made learning more engaging and effective, leading to higher literacy rates in primary education. The OECD (2021) reports that digital education has enhanced literacy rates through the use of data analytics and adaptive learning technologies. These tools tailor educational content to individual learning needs, ensuring that students receive the appropriate support to develop their literacy skills.

Digital literacy programs have been essential in preparing students for the digital economy. By integrating digital skills into the curriculum, educational institutions have not only improved literacy rates but also equipped students with the competencies needed for future employment. According to a study by the European Commission (2020), digital education

policies have been instrumental in promoting literacy across Europe. Initiatives like the Digital Education Action Plan have focused on enhancing digital competences and literacy through innovative teaching and learning practices.

Digital education has also facilitated lifelong learning, which is crucial for maintaining literacy levels. As highlighted by the International Telecommunication Union (2021), online learning platforms have provided opportunities for continuous education, allowing individuals to update their literacy skills throughout their lives. The role of digital education in uplifting literacy rates is also evident in refugee education programs. According to UNESCO (2021), digital learning solutions have been deployed in refugee camps, providing displaced individuals with access to quality education and improving their literacy levels.

In their comprehensive review, Kimmons and Veletsianos (2020) emphasize that digital education has enabled inclusive education by accommodating diverse learning needs. Assistive technologies and accessible digital content have ensured that students with disabilities can achieve literacy on par with their peers. A study by EdTech Hub (2020) found that the integration of artificial intelligence in digital education has enhanced literacy rates by providing personalized learning experiences. AI-driven platforms can identify learning gaps and provide targeted interventions, thereby improving literacy outcomes.

According to Schleicher (2021), digital education has facilitated peer learning and collaboration, which are essential for literacy development. Online forums and collaborative projects have enabled students to engage with each other and improve their literacy skills through social learning. The use of open educational resources (OER) in digital education has significantly contributed to global literacy rates. As noted by Hilton (2020), OER provide free access to high-quality educational materials, allowing learners from all socioeconomic backgrounds to enhance their literacy skills.

A study by van Dijk and Hacker (2021) highlights that digital literacy is crucial for navigating the digital world. Digital education initiatives that focus on both traditional and digital literacy skills have empowered individuals to participate fully in the digital society, thus improving overall literacy rates. Research by Sun and Chen (2021) indicates that digital education has promoted literacy through the use of social media platforms. Educational content shared on social media has reached a wide audience, making learning more accessible and engaging for people of all ages.

In their analysis, Bower and Christensen (2020) argue that digital education has transformed higher education, making it more flexible and accessible. Online degree programs and MOOCs have provided opportunities for higher education to a broader population, thereby enhancing literacy rates among adults. According to a report by the International Literacy Association (2022), digital education has been pivotal in advancing literacy through professional development for educators. Online training programs have equipped teachers with the skills to effectively integrate digital tools into their teaching practices, improving literacy instruction.

Research Questions

What are the contextual factors affecting the implementation and effectiveness of digital education in enhancing literacy rates?

What are the experiences of the stakeholders regarding the impact of digital education on literacy development?

Research Objectives

To Identify the contextual factors affecting the implementation and effectiveness of digital education in enhancing literacy rates.

To Explore the experiences of the stakeholders regarding the impact of digital education on literacy development.

Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design, specifically utilizing in-depth interviews to explore the influence of digital education on global literacy rates in the age of digital civilization. Qualitative research is chosen for its ability to provide rich, detailed insights into participants' experiences and perspectives, which are essential for understanding the complex, nuanced impact of digital education on literacy.

The study used purposive sampling to select participants who are knowledgeable and experienced with digital education. The sample included educators, learners, policymakers, and technology developers basically the stakeholders from diverse geographic regions to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. The criteria for selecting participants included their involvement in digital education initiatives and their ability to articulate their experiences and insights. A total 21 participants was interviewed to achieve data saturation, where no new themes or insights emerge from additional interviews (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006).

Data was collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews conducted via video conferencing platforms. The semi-structured format allows for a guided conversation that ensures key topics are covered while providing flexibility for participants to share their unique experiences and perspectives (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). An interview guide with open-ended questions was developed, focusing on:

Participants' experiences with digital education tools and platforms, perceived impacts of digital education on literacy skills, challenges and barriers to effective digital education and contextual factors influencing digital education outcomes.

Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes and was audio-recorded with participants' consent for accurate transcription and analysis. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the interview data. This method involved identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The process included the following steps:

Transcription

Audio recordings was transcribed verbatim to ensure accurate representation of participants' responses.

Familiarization

The researcher immersed themselves in the data by reading and re-reading transcripts to gain a comprehensive understanding of the content.

Coding

Initial codes were generated by systematically identifying and labelling significant features of the data that relate to the research objectives.

Theme Development

Codes were grouped into broader themes that capture the essence of participants' experiences and perspectives.

Reviewing Themes

Themes were reviewed and refined to ensure they accurately represent the data and are coherent and distinct.

Defining and Naming Themes

Each theme was clearly defined and named, providing a concise summary of its content and relevance to the research questions.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, several strategies were employed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985)

Credibility

Prolonged engagement and member checking was used to ensure the accuracy of the findings. Participants were asked to review and confirm the accuracy of the transcriptions and interpretations.

Transferability

Thick descriptions of the research context, participants, and findings was provided to allow readers to determine the applicability of the results to other contexts.

Dependability

An audit trail was maintained, documenting the research process, decisions made, and changes to the study design.

Confirmability

Reflexive journaling and peer debriefing was used to minimize researcher bias and ensure that the findings are shaped by the participants' experiences rather than the researcher's preconceptions. The study adhered to ethical guidelines to protect participants' rights and well-being. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring they are fully aware of the study's purpose, procedures, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing participants' data and securely storing all research materials.

Data Analysis

The qualitative study based on in-depth interviews to explore the influence of digital education on uplifting the global literacy rate revealed several key themes. These themes provide insights into how digital education impacts literacy and highlights both its benefits and challenges.

Enhanced Accessibility

Participants consistently noted that digital education significantly improves accessibility to learning resources. Online platforms and digital tools enabled students from remote or underserved regions to access quality education that was previously unavailable to them. This

enhanced accessibility is crucial for increasing literacy rates, especially in areas lacking traditional educational infrastructure.

Personalized Learning

Digital education allowed for personalized learning experiences, where educational content can be tailored to individual learning needs and paces. This personalization helps to address diverse learning styles and paces, making education more effective and engaging for students. Participants highlighted that personalized learning can lead to better understanding and retention of literacy skills.

Engagement and Motivation

The use of interactive and multimedia content in digital education was frequently mentioned as a factor that enhances student engagement and motivation. Gamification, videos, and interactive quizzes make learning more appealing and enjoyable, which can foster a more positive attitude towards education and improve literacy outcomes.

Technological Barriers

Despite the benefits, technological barriers remain a significant challenge. Participants pointed out issues such as limited internet access, inadequate digital devices, and technical difficulties that can hinder the effectiveness of digital education (Al Qalhati et al., 2020). These barriers are particularly pronounced in developing countries and rural areas, exacerbating the digital divide.

Teacher Training and Support

The success of digital education heavily depends on the competency of educators in using digital tools effectively. Many participants emphasized the need for better teacher training and ongoing support to help educators integrate digital technologies into their teaching practices. Without adequate training, the potential of digital education to improve literacy rates cannot be fully realized.

Quality of Digital Content

The quality of digital educational content is crucial for its effectiveness. Participants highlighted that poorly designed or inappropriate content could lead to disengagement or misinformation. Ensuring high-quality, relevant, and culturally sensitive content is essential for fostering literacy through digital education.

Equity and Inclusion

Digital education has the potential to promote equity and inclusion by providing educational opportunities to marginalized and disadvantaged groups. However, participants noted that without deliberate efforts to address equity, digital education could also reinforce existing inequalities. Ensuring inclusive practices and accessible content for all learners is necessary to uplift global literacy rates effectively.

Parental Involvement

The role of parents in supporting digital education was another significant theme. Participants observed that parental involvement can greatly enhance the learning process, particularly for

younger children. Educating parents about digital tools and encouraging their active participation in their children's learning can contribute positively to literacy development.

Sustainability and Long-term Impact

Participants expressed concerns about the sustainability and long-term impact of digital education initiatives. There is a need for continuous investment in technology, infrastructure, and training to ensure that digital education remains effective and can adapt to evolving educational needs and technological advancements.

Cultural Sensitivity and Localization

Finally, cultural sensitivity and localization of digital content emerged as critical factors. Participants stressed the importance of creating content that resonates with local cultures and languages to make learning more relevant and effective. This approach can help in better engagement and understanding, thereby improving literacy rates.

The thematic analysis revealed that while digital education offers significant opportunities to enhance global literacy rates, several challenges must be addressed. Enhanced accessibility, personalized learning, and increased engagement are notable benefits, but technological barriers, the need for quality content, and ensuring equity and inclusion are critical issues that need attention. Addressing these themes comprehensively can help in leveraging digital education to uplift literacy rates effectively.

Finding and Conclusion

The qualitative study based on in-depth interviews exploring the influence of digital education on uplifting global literacy rates in the age of digital civilization reveals several significant findings.

Unequal access

A significant barrier identified by all participants was the persistent digital divide. Unequal access to technology, infrastructure, and internet connectivity remains a major obstacle to equitable digital education, particularly in developing countries.

Teacher training and support

Educators emphasized the need for ongoing training and support in integrating technology effectively into literacy instruction. Many participants expressed a desire for professional development opportunities that equip them with the pedagogical skills required to leverage digital tools for diverse learning styles.

Engaging content and interactivity

Participants highlighted the importance of creating engaging and interactive digital content that caters to different learning styles and cultural contexts. The potential of digital storytelling, gamification, and personalized learning approaches was seen as crucial for motivating learners and promoting active engagement.

Assessment and evaluation

The challenge of assessing literacy skills in a digital environment emerged as a critical concern. Participants acknowledged the need for new evaluation methods that consider the evolving nature of literacy in the digital age, moving beyond traditional standardized testing.

Digital literacy and critical thinking

The ability to navigate the vast amount of information available online and think critically about its accuracy and source was identified as a crucial aspect of 21st-century literacy. Participants discussed the potential of social media platforms to promote critical thinking skills when utilized effectively alongside educational resources.

Socioeconomic factors

The study revealed the complex interplay between socioeconomic factors and access to digital education. Participants from low-income communities highlighted the challenges of affording technology and internet access, which can further exacerbate existing educational inequalities.

Lifelong learning

The dynamic nature of the digital landscape necessitates a shift towards a lifelong learning approach to literacy. Participants emphasized the importance of equipping learners with the skills to continuously adapt and learn new technologies throughout their lives.

Digital education holds immense potential to uplift global literacy rates; however, significant challenges need to be addressed. Bridging the digital divide, providing ongoing teacher training, and developing engaging content are crucial steps. Rethinking assessment methods and fostering critical thinking skills are equally important. Furthermore, recognizing the influence of socioeconomic factors and promoting lifelong learning are essential for ensuring equitable access to the benefits of digital education.

Recommendation

Investment in infrastructure

Increased investment in infrastructure development, particularly in underserved communities, is necessary to bridge the digital divide and ensure equitable access to technology.

Teacher Training Programs

Comprehensive teacher training programs that equip educators with the necessary pedagogical skills and technological fluency are crucial for effective integration of digital tools into literacy instruction.

Culturally Relevant Content Development

Developing culturally relevant and engaging digital content that caters to diverse learning styles and backgrounds is essential for maximizing the impact of digital education initiatives.

Collaboration and Partnerships

Fostering collaboration between educators, policymakers, technology developers, and the private sector is vital for creating sustainable and effective digital education programs.

Focus on lifelong learning

Promoting a culture of lifelong learning that equips individuals with the skills to continuously adapt and acquire new digital literacy skills is essential in the ever-evolving digital age. By addressing these challenges and implementing the recommendations outlined above, digital

education can play a transformative role in uplifting global literacy rates and empowering learners to thrive in the digital civilization

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