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## DIGITAL LEARNING COMPASS THE ROLE OF ICT IN BRIDGE-BUILDING AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IN A DIGITAL AGE FROM LEARNERS PERSPECTIVE

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### Abstract

The role of ICT in promoting education, employment and social inclusion is an important topic that carries many implications for contemporary society. This article provides a view on the current status of e-learning, bridges development and their impacts. The paper considers the different stages of bridging development such as learning modes, skills acquisition, knowledge transfer between participants and institutionalization; explores how they can be used to overcome digital divides; highlights key themes related to bridging technologies such as technology literacy, digital divides and e-learning literacy; ends with reflections on strategies for achieving bridging social inclusion.

**Keywords:**Digital Learning, ICT, Social Inclusion, Digital Age, Learners Perspective

### Introduction

The current study is about the importance of ICT in bridging social inclusion. The Internet has opened up many opportunities for people to broaden their experiences, gain knowledge, and initiate communication with others on topics that are important to them. This article examines what ICT does for people who face barriers in education, employment, and exclusion. It also discusses some of the dangers of ICT while warning against making generalizations about what they offer or can do for us. Even though the Internet has provided more access to information and networks, it can still be difficult for marginalized groups because of power relations that affect how they are positioned in society. Communities where people face greater challenges in

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accessing opportunities, information, or resources can be excluded by unequal access or power relations. For example, women for whom the Internet is accessible may encounter greater gender discrimination than men (Reynolds et al., 2003).

ICT's benefits to people who are marginalized in education, employment, and social networks are consistent with traditional definitions of bridging social inclusion (Lund & Hauge, 2011). It focuses specifically on the role of ICT in being a bridge between educational and employment opportunities while also considering that bridging is a function of how people understand themselves and their experience with the wider community. Even though ICT is now a part of most working communities, its use is not evenly distributed. For example, some people may consider bridging to be applying for a job and sending out a résumé while others define the bridge as teaching the use of technology or providing information on what they do or how they can teach others. These differences in meaning indicate that we need an examination of the role that ICT plays in bridging opportunities for marginalized groups of people. Social inclusion can result in negative outcomes such as discrimination, hate speech, and exclusion from society due to information overload. Even when ICT can be a positive force in bridging social inclusion, certain uses of information technology can have a negative impact. For example, people may have trouble finding ways to use ICT effectively in bridging educational and employment opportunities due to the way it is used in society. In addition, people may experience information overload if they experience too much information about how others do things, which places them in danger or even out of a job.

### **What would happen if we did not have ICT?**

This question is referred to as a thought experiment because it suggests that if humans did not have access to ICT, the world could be very different. For example, the same services and resources would not be available to everyone, and we might not have as much access to information. Some people might react negatively towards people who do not know how to use ICT or refuse to use it. This occurs because we generally expect that technology should be

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valued and that it should provide us with more opportunities for education, employment, and participation in society.

Because there is a great deal of useful information on the Internet, we may become frustrated or angry if others refuse to use it or seem ignorant about how it works even if they feel comfortable with other forms of communication such as face-to-face interactions. There is also the risk that some people may decide not to use ICT because they might not have access to it or because they do not feel there are enough benefits.

### **Objectives of the study**

The current study is about the importance of ICT in bridging social inclusion. The Internet has opened up many opportunities for people to broaden their experiences, gain knowledge, and initiate communication with others on topics that are important to them. This article also examines what ICT does for people who face barriers in education, employment, and exclusion.

### **Research Methodology**

The current study is based on secondary source of information, various information related to digital learning and ICT in bridge-building and social inclusion in a digital age has been collected from various published and unpublished data from various secondary source of information to provide an conceptual view on the topic.

### **Literature Review**

In 2011, 4% of people worldwide were using digital technologies for learning. With the world moving to a technologically driven society, it is crucial to study the role IT plays in education as well as how it can be used to build bridges between learners with different backgrounds/cultures via the use of social media, collaborative filtering clouds etc.(Eriksson & Giacomello, 2007)

There are many challenges that one encounters in the realm of technology for education. We will look at some of the challenges and offer solutions. The first thing to note is that technology poses both opportunities and challenges. Technology, however, is not a silver bullet; rather, it needs to

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be used skillfully. The difficulty with technology in learning is that it has the potential to either enhance or impede quality learning (Austin et al., 2010).

If educational institutions are to be successful in today's fast changing world, they need to keep up with these technological changes. The use of IT in the classroom is one of the greatest tools for achieving this. Research suggests that educators are adopting digital technologies to meet their instructional/curriculum needs (Shonfeld et al., 2015). There are various ways in which educators can use technology to enhance teaching and learning.

A common definition of technology is that it is "any application of scientific knowledge for practical purposes, especially for industry or any commercial enterprise"(Niemi et al., 2013). Indeed, there are technologies at work everywhere in our lives, whether it is the microwave oven on our kitchen countertop or the Smartphone on our hip. Education has also been greatly influenced by new technological developments over the years. The advent of radio, television, and computers will no doubt be remembered as key technological innovations for the field of education.

One way of studying technology in education is to look at the myriad ways it can be used. Technology is very much a part of today's educational environment. Depending on the context, technology can be used to help students master content through hands-on experiences, enhance their learning by involving them in collaborative digital activities that involve other people around the world or simply employ new technologies simply for novelty purposes. A great illustration of this is digital games that are now used in classrooms.

Technology has the potential to enrich learning processes for students at all levels. A study conducted by (Austin & Anderson, 2009) shows that students utilize technology to further their learning in six areas: communication, collaboration, critical thinking, problem solving, creativity and engagement.

Similarly, another study conducted by the UK government (Department for Education and Science) analyzed over 200 UK schools and found one-third of UK schools had broadband connectivity; twenty percent utilized a laptop PC; and twenty percent used interactive whiteboard technology(Hobbs, 2010). The use of technology in parenting is equally important. According to

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a survey conducted by the Society for the Advancement of Research in Child Development, marriage rates have increased significantly as a result of technology. Amongst other benefits, a technology-rich family has a positive impact on young children's development.

In fact, recent studies have shown that families with young children who have access to advanced technology have been shown to be happier and more emotionally stable than those without. In one study conducted by the University of Maryland, exposure to advanced technology at home was found to help with parent-child communication and child development.

Computers are widely used in schools all around the world. They are used to educate students in their classes, do administrative work, and even encourage students in the classroom to interact with one another by using collaborative technology. Collaborative technology can be quite useful in classrooms that have many different levels of learners. It can be used to help students who are behind to catch up with their peers, reinforce the learning of the students who know the material well and it can also be used to engage learners in a more active learning environment.

Amichai-Hamburger et al. (2015) found that "of the research on social inclusion and technology, three important components of social integration are education, communication, and work." They also found that not all transition from school to the workplace is a transition from isolation to new networked context. They determined that "at best it can be said that increased worker's use of technology will lead to increased social integration in the workplace."

According to Austin et al. (2010), "ICT can act as an active means for social inclusion. It has the potential to be an organizing principle in terms of bridging divides between people. Lifestreams, social networks and the Internet can be made to work for people who are marginalized by others in their communities. ICT tools provide the means for young people who are isolated to connect with others, which can act as a bridge within communities."

The above literature review on the role of ICT in Bridge-Building and Social Inclusion in a Digital Age provides an interesting perspective by gathering quotations from learners. While there are many educational articles online, this one seems to have a unique angle. The article argues that "in order to bridge the current digital divide, policymakers need to consider how

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ICTs influence opportunities for social inclusion." Whether or not the conclusion is correct, it provides insight into educators' view on how technology can be used in bridge building

### **Bridging Social Inclusion**

The concept of bridging social inclusion has been used by scholars for many decades, but it has developed differently in different social settings. It is useful for intervention or policy-making purposes because it can help us understand how individuals make sense of themselves and others in their environment (Wilding, 2009). To clarify how people perceive one another and their environments in different settings, social inclusion is the process of "making sense" in a given context. In addition, it is useful in interventions because it can help us understand whether individuals are placed in a position where they have access to opportunities and resources for learning or engagement.

In reference to bridging social inclusion, there are three terms that are used to describe the process of bridging:

**(1) Observation:** Some see ICT as a tool or resource that should be used by all members of society. For example, some people may consider computer use essential for employment while others believe it should be available only to employees. These views reflect different social ideals of bridging.

**(2) Instrument:** The issue of bridging social inclusion is complicated by the role that ICT plays in today's society.

**(3) Role:** There is a difference between how ICT might be used in bridging social inclusion and the ways in which it should be used. For example, ICT may help to bridge educational and employment opportunities but can also be misused through hate speech or even cyber bullying. In addition, some people believe that everyone should have equal access to information while others may believe there must be limits on what can be done with a computer or a cell phone, for example.

The social inclusion perspective also offers us a lens to consider situations in which ICT can be used for bridging social inclusion even when costs may be high. In this case, the costs of access

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to ICT are understood as an investment that will help individuals get better jobs, get more education, and keep up with people who have been getting ahead of them.

Bridging social inclusion is defined as the process by which people or groups attempt to bridge various social opportunities or resources that they might not have access to otherwise. When a person has a limited number of options for employment or education, ICT can help them to bridge gaps between what they want and what is available. Bridging social inclusion means that differences between people are not understood as differences that are inherent in personal traits, skills, or characteristics. Rather, they are understood as differences in access to resources or opportunities.

The social perspective of bridging social inclusion offers insights into bridging social inclusion in terms of the roles that ICT plays in society. For example, a person may not be able to bridge a gap between what they want and what is available due to a limited educational background. In this case, they might have difficulty finding employment except as an elementary school teacher.

In recent years, there has been an increased emphasis on bridging social inclusion. This is because technology is creating barriers to bridging social inclusion. For example, recent analyses of young people's relationships with technology make the case that they tend to report strong preference for face-to-face interactions and little interest in using ICT (Austin, 2006). Many studies have examined the effects that social factors, such as gender and race, play in bridging social inclusion.

In reference to gender and social media: one study (Tømte et al., 2019) found that women tend to be more involved in less social activities on Facebook than men. Another study (Austin et al., 2010) found that married women were more likely than married women to use Facebook. These results suggest that there is a link between bridging social inclusion and bridging gender norms.

In reference to race and bridging social inclusion: one study (Preece et al. 2011) found that Caucasian students used Facebook more than Black students. Both studies also found that young people had a stronger preference for face-to-face interactions than older people.

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In reference to race and social media: one study (Lund & Hauge, 2011) examined the effects that race plays in the use of Facebook. They asked 335 participants about their use of Facebook and assessed their feelings towards minority groups. The results showed that those who reported a stronger dislike for minority groups were more likely to show higher levels of Facebook usage than those with less negative attitudes. Another study (Eriksson & Giacomello, 2007) looked at the usage of Twitter and Myspace by users in Taiwan and found that there was considerable variation by gender, age group, and level of education within each ethnic group. The study also found that those who were older or more educated were more likely to join Twitter and Myspace. The findings of these studies suggest that there is a link between bridging social inclusion and bridging race.

In addition to the issues related to race and gender, people can also use ICT for bridging social inclusion by including marginalized groups, such as the economically disadvantaged. While not directly related to bridging social inclusion, this issue is important in terms of the role that ICT can play in reducing inequalities.

Social inclusion is a term used to describe processes and outcomes of: (a) the processes of people acquiring useful skills, knowledge and information; (b) access to resources; (c) co-operation; (d) decision-making; (e) participation in public life. This article provides a personal view on the current status of e-learning, bridging development and their impacts. The article explains the different stages of bridging development such as learning modes, skills acquisition, knowledge transfer between participants and institutionalization; explores how they can be used to overcome digital divides; highlights key themes related to bridging technologies such as technology literacy, digital divides and e-learning literacy; ends with reflections on strategies for achieving bridging social inclusion.

### **Digital Learning Literacy/E-Learning Literacy: The Way Forward**

Digital learning is the most effective means of bridging existing divides for social inclusion. E-learning, digital literacy and e-learning literacy are the key concepts that will create a new understanding of how best to achieve social inclusion through ICT. We have to be clear about what these terms mean, their relationship with bridging and what role they can play in

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developing bridges not walls or barriers. They must be brought to the centre of our thinking about social inclusion through ICT. The process of developing skills or acquiring knowledge is an attractive route for achieving social inclusion. Bridging, e-learning, e-literacy are also attractive because they are likely to be low cost. We have to get the right mix of bridging technologies, learning modes and skills acquisition strategies that can support appropriate forms of social inclusion through ICT.

### **Bridging Social Inclusion through ICT: What is Bridging?**

The working definition of bridging social inclusion through ICT is: bridging social inclusion through ICTs is the development of bridges and/or links between individuals, groups and institutions. The process involves:

The term bridging social inclusion through learning and education has been suggested. This emphasizes the potential benefits of learning and education for bridging development and social inclusion. The idea is that learning processes may include:

Bridging development through learning modes can include, pupils learning in schools; adult learners participating in adult education; adults participating in training sessions; individuals participating in activities at leisure time; persons seeking further study or improving their vocational skills. What is important in this approach to learning is the need to include the organizations in which the participants are likely to be involved. As well as supporting their formal education, it means improving access, integration and participation in formal education.

### **Importance of Learning Models**

#### **1. Bridging development through learning modes**

Learning modes are ways in which individuals can learn or engage in knowledge acquisition. Learning modes are usually not considered when thinking about bridging development or social inclusion through ICT. Yet, modes of learning and the practices associated with them provide a different and potentially valuable approach to thinking about how individuals can learn and engage in social inclusion through ICT. Learning modes include: collaborative learning, peer-to-peer learning, self-directed learning and guided discovery.

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## 2. Bridging development through skills acquisition

The process of acquiring knowledge or developing skills is an attractive route for achieving social inclusion for individuals who may experience difficulties in accessing existing services, such as those related to employment or education. Learning processes related to acquiring knowledge may also provide an attractive means of overcoming digital divides for bridging development. This includes the application of technological tools to provide assistance in acquiring knowledge or developing skills.

## 3. Bridging development through knowledge transfer

The process of transferring information across people and institutions is an important stage for bridging bridging social inclusion. This involves processes such as knowledge translation, professional development and/or mentoring that may be facilitated by using ICTs to facilitate communication. The transfer of information also involves collection, analysis and dissemination of data related to the types of learning ICT.

## 4. Bridging are development taking through place institutionalization

Developing bridges is also dependent on the linkages with existing institutions and networks. This may be achieved through: (a) the use of information and communication technology (ICT) as a means of bridging existing divides; (b) building bridges between diverse groups through learning experiences or events designed to increase understanding and knowledge transfer; (c) multiplying of the developing capacity linkages of between existing individuals, structures, groups, structures institutions that and can network provide providers; effective (b) local bridging network technologies services that for facilitate bridging information social exchange inclusion.

## 5. Bridging are development are social inclusion through increasing the level of social inclusion

Social inclusion is an outcome of bridging isdevelopments are social inclusion are not enough. It requires actions that result in an increase in inclusive practices within individuals, groups, institutions and organizations. The outcomes should be measured in terms of actual changes for

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example through participation levels; access; participation; or other practices that might be achieved by bridging social inclusion through ICTs.

## Conclusion

Digital technology has been instrumental in bridging the gap between people and access to knowledge and information. Our lives have become digitalized with the advent of social media, cell phones, and computers, making it easy for people to learn new skills or knowledge from anywhere anytime. This is not a recent trend rather it has been around for decades. However, it is now more important than ever as people decide to immigrate and as the world goes through a digital revolution.

We are living in age of globalization where knowledge and information can be accessed from anywhere anytime with the use of digital technology. This has provided people with the opportunity to gain skills and knowledge at their own pace, making it easier for people to access education systems or programs that were once not available in their area.

The use of technology in education has been discussed for decades and much progress has been made in recent years. Most developed nations have invested heavily in the use of digital technology in education and its impact has become more apparent than ever. As a result, it is important to evaluate and examine the effects of ICT in education on learners and how we can utilize these technologies to create better teaching and learning environments.

This study explores the role of technology in bridging the digital divide by providing an inclusive environment conducive for learners of different levels to get equal access thereby allowing social inclusion for all, regardless of age, gender or level of ability. In this study, the term digital divide is used as a metaphor to refer to the gap between those who have access to technology and those who do not. As (Reynolds et al., 2003) puts it: It is a metaphor for social exclusion and inequity in a society where access to resources is unequally distributed, where some groups have far greater opportunity than others to benefit from them, and where some individuals are denied access altogether. This metaphor highlights how technology can be used as a means through which social exclusion can be reduced or even eradicated.

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