INFORMATION LITERACY AND ITS ROLE IN BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE IN KENYAN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND LEARNING: SURVEY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

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The digital age is heavily characterized by the merits of advanced technologies where digital divide is one of the major issues affecting the development of the knowledge geographical society. Due to this development, the innovation of new technology is unfairly utilized by the rich members of society at the expense of poor ones. Quite a lot of research work done in developed and developing countries testify to the evidence of this technological divide. This study sought to examine the information literacy and its role in bridging the digital divide in Kenyan institutions of higher education and learning, and has suggested appropriate solutions to reduce the technological imbalance. The objectives of the study were to examine fundamental indicators of information literacy in bridging the digital divide in institutions of higher learning, to assess information literacy initiatives being undertaken in bridging the digital divide, to examine how broadband subscription can be applied to support learning and research in universities, and to find out factors that influence ownership, use and non-use of digital information devices. Data analysis involved both qualitative and quantitative aspects, so as to provide opportunities for the integration of a variety of theoretical perspectives and enhance the meaning of a singular perspective. This was a case-control study that looked into the role which information literacy has played on one group of students, comparing them with another group with characteristics of such deficiency. The study particularly sought to explore the situation in the institutions of higher learning with reference to the University of Nairobi. In total, 283 respondents were selected through stratified and purposeful sampling methods. Questionnaires with closed and open ended questions were used to collect data and information. The study led to an effective remedy and equal access to information and communications technology in institutions of higher learning. The study found that the major factors hampering access and utility of digital information is the transition of digitization of resources, poor internet connectivity, insufficient ICT devices, and lack of skills and familiarity in the use of the same. The major recommendations of the study include the need to train and reposition the information professionals and custodians, formulation of literacy programs, sufficient acquisition of ICT resources, enhancement of bandwidth management, and imparting information literacy in schools. The study finally concluded that it is crucial for institutions of higher education and learning to do everything possible to bridge digital divide, without disregarding the need for enhancing information literacy and ICT courses in pre-university learning institution.

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