

From the Margins to the Mainstream: A Policy-Informed Model for Advancing Digital Literacy in Marginalised Societies

Shanta Goswami Varma and Malay Neerav

Abstract

In an era marked by rapid digital transformation, the divide between connected and unconnected populations continues to widen, particularly among marginalised communities. This conceptual paper synthesises scholarship on the digital divide, digital inclusion, policy reform, and inclusive pedagogy to propose the LITE framework (Literacy, Infrastructure, Training, and Equity) as an integrated model for advancing digital inclusion in marginalised societies. By aligning the LITE framework with Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and micro-credentialing strategies, the paper advances a flexible, culturally grounded, and context-sensitive approach to learning and digital empowerment. The analysis incorporates both national and international policy perspectives, with India serving as a representative Global South case study due to its ambitious digital education initiatives and persistent structural inequalities. Case studies from Bangladesh, Kenya, Canada, and India further illustrate the framework's applicability across diverse socio-cultural contexts. This integrated approach seeks to empower marginalised learners by promoting resilience, skill development, educational inclusion, and long-term social participation.

Keywords: Digital Divide; Digital Inclusion; Marginalised Communities; Universal Design for Learning (UDL); Community-based Digital Empowerment

Introduction

The global COVID-19 pandemic exposed deep disparities in education systems worldwide, especially in the adoption and delivery of digital instruction. While many institutions in well-resourced settings rapidly adapted to online learning, leveraging technology, policy, and instructor training, this shift also highlighted a stark reality, that an entire population was left behind (UNESCO,

SHANTA GOSWAMI VARMA, Prof. Curriculum, Instruction and Technology, College of Education, Auburn University at Montgomery, Alabama. Email: svarma@aum.edu

MALAY NEERAV, Dean, Academics & Head, Department of History & Political Science, St. Stephen's College, University of Delhi, Delhi. Email: malayneerav@ststephens.edu