

Digital Demands: Addressing the Digital Divide in Basic Education and Its Relation to Academic Performance and Aspirations

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Abstract : Amidst an increasingly digitalized society, information and communication technologies have been seamlessly integrated into the economic, social, and political life of individuals. Information has been regarded as a primary good, essential to the wellbeing and self-respect of individuals in society. The digital engagements of an individual play a key role in a variety of life outcomes ranging from academic performance to entrepreneurial success to health service uptake. As a result of varying degrees of access to the Internet and ICTs across populations and individuals, a digital divide emerges. Education, a sector pivotal to directing individual life trajectories, has been radically transformed with regards to the learning process and access to information and thus faces the implications of the digital divide, as new waves of inequalities are introduced in the classroom. As the period of basic education is critical to transitioning into civic life or higher education, digital inequalities are capable of aggravating pre-existing social inequalities. Through survey-questionnaires, conducted on 152 high school students from a Philippine public school, the study reveals the correlation of academic performance and aspirations (for their highest academic qualification) to access to digital technologies and the Internet, according to Van Dijk's four measurements of digital poverty, namely: motivational access, material access, skills access, and usage access. The findings reveal a positive correlation for academic performance whereas no correlation was found between aspirations and digital access. In the study, significant correlational differences were also found between genders, specifically, in terms of skills access and academic performance.

Keywords : digital divide, ICTs, inequality, education, life trajectories

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