

Chapter 4

Enhancing Digital Literacy Among Chinese Civil Servants: Evaluation, Disparities Analysis, and Improvement Pathways

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ABSTRACT

This chapter investigates the digital literacy of Chinese civil servants, focusing on evaluation criteria, variations across levels and departments, and improvement strategies. It proposes a tailored evaluation framework to assess digital literacy, identifying strengths, weaknesses, and influencing factors through empirical research. The study offers a comprehensive analysis and recommendations to enhance digital competencies in the public sector, structured into sections on literature review, indicator system construction, evaluation, and countermeasures. This work contributes valuable insights for advancing digital literacy among civil servants in China.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) has issued several policies to promote the digital literacy of civil servants. In 2021, the “Recommendations of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on the Formulation of the Fourteenth Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development and the Vision and Goals for the 23rd Five-Year Plan” for the first time made “strengthening the construction of a digital society and a digital government” a key task in China’s government construction in the coming period. Meanwhile, the Guiding Opinions of the State Council on Strengthening the Construction of Digital Government emphasize the enhancement of the cadres’ digital thinking, digital skills and digital literacy, the innovation of the mechanism for introducing and training and using talents in the construction of digital government, and the construction of a composite cadre that is politically oriented, business-knowledgeable, and technologically proficient. The “Outline of Action for Enhancing Digital Literacy and Skills of the Whole Population”, issued

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by the Central Committee for Cybersecurity and Informatization, explicitly states that “it is necessary to enhance the digital governance capacity of leading cadres and civil servants”. As the country’s top leader, General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out that “being good at acquiring data, analyzing data, and applying data is a basic skill for leading cadres to do a good job”. General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out that “being good at acquiring data, analyzing data, and applying data is a basic skill for leading cadres to do a good job”.

As can be seen from the above important policies and leaders’ speeches, the Chinese Government attaches great importance to improving the digital literacy of public officials. The driving force behind digital government and civil servants’ digital literacy is the development of the times and the needs of citizens. Firstly, digital transformation extends to all areas of the economy, and people are beginning to focus on how digitalization can empower government governance and the proper dimensions of digital government. Secondly, civil servants are the drivers and practitioners of digital government transformation and construction in the context of digital government in the context of digital government. Civil servants constitute the digital government system on the one hand, and on the other hand, the digital literacy and learning motivation of civil servants are the key to the success or failure of digital government. Thirdly, the level of digital literacy of civil servants is an important and critical factor affecting the construction of a digital government, which will have a direct impact on the efficiency of government work.

Due to the importance of civil servants’ digital literacy, Chinese scholars have begun to pay attention to this issue in recent years. However, compared to the digital quality of other professions, especially the teaching profession, there has been relatively little research on the digital literacy of civil servants, especially studies that focus on government systems in developing countries. Therefore, exploring the digital literacy of civil servants in the context of China is a study with marginal contributions. This chapter focuses on the following three research questions: Q1. How Chinese civil servants’ digital literacy should be evaluated? Q2. How Digital Literacy Differs Across Different Levels and Departments of Civil Servants in China? Q3. How to Enhance the Digital Literacy of Chinese Civil Servants?

To address the above questions, this chapter aims to constructing a digital literacy evaluation system for civil servants that fits the Chinese context and judging the strengths and weaknesses of Chinese civil servants’ digital literacy through the application of the system. Finally, based on the empirical study, we explore the influencing factors of Chinese civil servants’ digital literacy and summarize the path to improve it. The remainder of this chapter contains sections on literature review, indicator system construction, digital literacy evaluation, empirical research, and countermeasure suggestions.

LITERATURE REVIEW OF DIGITAL COMPETENCE ON THE SCOPE OF CHINA

Definition of Digital Literacy

Because of its importance, digital literacy has been a long period hot research issue in developed Western countries as well as in international organizations. Gilster (1998) pointed out that digital literacy is the ability of individuals to use digital technology to understand and use all kinds of digital information stored and displayed on computers and to operate digital media. Eshet-Alkalai (2004) suggests that digital literacy is not just the ability to use software or digital devices, but also includes a variety of complex cognitive, motor, social and emotional skills. Ferrari (2012) states that digital literacy is the set of knowledge, skills, attitudes, abilities, strategies, and awareness needed to perform tasks using

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