

Chapter 17

Promoting Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education for Indigenous Peoples Through E-Learning and Digital Resources

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the transformative potential of e-learning technologies in indigenous education, addressing persistent educational disparities. Through comprehensive literature analysis and international case studies, it investigates how digital resources and innovative educational strategies can overcome geographical barriers, preserve indigenous languages and foster culturally responsive education. The paper critically analyzes successful digital learning initiatives and identifies best practices in implementation. It concludes with actionable recommendations for researchers, educators, and policymakers, advocating for indigenous leadership, investment in digital infrastructure, and the respectful integration of indigenous and Western knowledge systems. By navigating these complexities, the study posits that e-learning is a powerful tool for creating global equitable, culturally affirming and effective educational experiences for indigenous learners.

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INTRODUCTION

Indigenous peoples, comprising approximately 476 million individuals worldwide, represent a rich tapestry of cultures, languages, and traditional knowledge systems (United Nations, 2020). Despite their significant contributions to global cultural diversity and sustainable practices, indigenous communities often need help accessing quality education. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) emphasizes the right of indigenous peoples to establish and control their educational systems in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning (United Nations, 2007).

The reality of indigenous education globally presents a complex picture. While some countries have made strides in incorporating indigenous perspectives into their national curricula, others need help providing even primary educational access to indigenous communities. A study by Naylor et al. (2020) across various countries revealed that indigenous students consistently underperform compared to their non-indigenous counterparts in standardized educational assessments, highlighting a persistent achievement gap.

The challenges in providing quality education to indigenous communities are multifaceted and deeply rooted in historical, socioeconomic, and geographical factors. The remoteness of many indigenous settlements often results in limited access to educational infrastructure and qualified teachers (Wilks et al., 2020). This geographical isolation is compounded by socioeconomic disparities, with many indigenous communities experiencing higher rates of poverty, which further impedes educational access and resources (Biddle & Markham, 2018).

Language barriers present another significant challenge. Many indigenous languages are endangered, and education systems often prioritize dominant national languages, leading to a disconnect between home and school environments for indigenous learners (Hornberger, 2019). This linguistic mismatch can result in cognitive dissonance and reduced learning outcomes. Furthermore, the lack of culturally relevant curricula and pedagogies that respect and incorporate indigenous knowledge systems has been identified as a significant barrier to effective learning among Indigenous students (Nakata et al., 2020). Traditional educational models often need to recognize the unique ways of knowing and learning intrinsic to indigenous cultures, leading to disengagement and high dropout rates.

In the face of these challenges, e-learning and digital resources present promising opportunities for enhancing educational access and quality for indigenous learners. The flexibility and scalability of digital technologies offer potential solutions to overcome geographical barriers and resource limitations (Rennie et al., 2019). E-learning platforms can be tailored to incorporate indigenous languages and cultural content, promoting linguistic diversity and cultural preservation. Lockard and De

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