

Chapter 4

Digital Competences: Weak Links in the Ramp-up of Digital Public Services

Balazs Benjámín Budai

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9793-4680>

Ludovika University of Public Service, Hungary

Gábor Town Bozsó

Ludovika University of Public Service, Hungary

Sándor T. Csuhai

Ludovika University of Public Service, Hungary

István Tózsza

Economic Geography and Urban Marketing Centre, Hungary

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the intersection of digital literacy, digital public services, and urban competitiveness, focusing on the Hungarian context. Using a nationally representative survey of 1,000 adults, the research explores disparities in digital competencies across demographic groups, settlement types, and socioeconomic strata. The findings reveal significant gaps in basic digital skills, with nearly half of the population unable to perform fundamental digital tasks independently. Rural and economically disadvantaged areas face pronounced challenges, though some smaller municipalities exhibit unexpectedly high proficiency levels, potentially linked to the migration of digital nomads. The study emphasizes the need for targeted digital literacy programs, simplified e-government platforms, and investments in digital infrastructure. By fostering inclusive digitalization, municipalities can enhance their economic resilience and attract talent and investment, ultimately improving their competitive standing.

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3693-6547-2.ch004

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between the digital literacy of citizens and digital public services is inherently reciprocal and critical for the effective implementation of e-governance and public administration initiatives. Citizens with higher levels of digital literacy are more likely to access and effectively use digital public services. This includes navigating e-government platforms, completing administrative tasks online, and utilizing digital tools for public services. Low digital literacy acts as a barrier to accessing these services, leading to a digital exclusion of significant societal segments, such as the elderly, rural populations, and those with limited education.

Digital public services are designed to streamline administrative processes and reduce costs, but their success depends on citizens' ability to interact with them. High digital literacy ensures faster adoption rates and better utilization of these services. Without adequate digital skills, even well-designed public service platforms fail to achieve their intended impact, leading to underutilization and inefficiencies. Digital literacy empowers citizens to provide feedback on public services, fostering continuous improvement and alignment with user needs. Conversely, a digitally literate population encourages governments to innovate and expand their digital offerings, creating a cycle of mutual growth.

The integration of digital literacy in public services enhances inclusivity, ensuring equitable access to opportunities like job applications, education, healthcare, and welfare services. On the other hand, gaps in digital literacy contribute to social and economic inequality, as digitally illiterate citizens are unable to access resources that could improve their lives. Many studies and policy papers have already declared that digital inequality is polarising society that the employment prospects of those left behind in the digitalisation process (digital illiterates) to acquire jobs requiring digital skills have been gradually fading. This situation has been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The pandemic has also proven that digital literacy is a key pillar of economic resilience and competitive advantage of governments in times of crises. Higher digital competencies mitigate exclusion, enabling broader access to job opportunities and education. Moreover, a digitally skilled workforce attracts businesses, fosters innovation, and improves economic output, which are essential for public sector competitiveness. Nevertheless, the results of the previous the Hungarian National Social Inclusion Strategy (2014-2020) revealed that nearly 8% of the Hungarian population (800,000 people) has been facing multiple disadvantage experience. Moreover, the projects of the 104 calls evaluated in line with the Strategy were partially completed (14%), and 40% of them had not even started. Just under 4% of the disadvantaged adult population have the highest level of education attainment at secondary school, around 25% have not written or read significantly in the last two

18 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/digital-competences/369849

Related Content

Adoption of Scholarly Databases in a Developing Country

Foluke Okocha (2021). *International Journal of Digital Literacy and Digital Competence* (pp. 20-32).

www.irma-international.org/article/adoption-of-scholarly-databases-in-a-developing-country/305720

Multiple Literacies and Environmental Science Education: Information Communication Technologies in Formal and Informal Learning Environments

Ruth Hickey and Hilary Whitehouse (2010). *Multiple Literacy and Science Education: ICTs in Formal and Informal Learning Environments* (pp. 123-141).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/multiple-literacies-environmental-science-education/39398

Distributed Agile Development: Applying a Coverage Analysis Approach to the Evaluation of a Communication Technology Assessment Tool

Asif Qumer Gill (2018). *Information and Technology Literacy: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications* (pp. 1633-1655).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/distributed-agile-development/189017

From Working Groups on Facebook to Online Shopping by WhatsApp: Mobilizations From Communication to Development

Ronaldo Josué Faller (2024). *International Journal of Digital Literacy and Digital Competence* (pp. 1-17).

www.irma-international.org/article/from-working-groups-on-facebook-to-online-shopping-by-whatsapp/359338

Assistive Technologies, Digital Literacy and Didactic for Inclusion

Eugenia Treglia, Angela Magnanini, Gianni Caione and Monica Alina Lungu (2019). *International Journal of Digital Literacy and Digital Competence* (pp. 1-9).

www.irma-international.org/article/assistive-technologies-digital-literacy-and-didactic-for-inclusion/240214