Chapter 3
Bridging the Digital Literacy Gap:
Effective Collaboration Between Institutes of Higher Education and the Workforce for Technology Integration

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ABSTRACT

This research explores effective collaboration between higher education institutions and the workforce to bridge the digital literacy gap in an increasingly technology-driven economy. Digital literacy, encompassing a range of competencies beyond basic computer skills, is vital for professional success. However, a significant mismatch persists between the digital skills imparted by educational institutions and those demanded by the workforce, leading to challenges in employment and productivity. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study investigates current digital literacy needs, examines successful collaboration models, and proposes actionable strategies to align curricula with industry requirements. Findings highlight the potential of cooperative digital hubs and integrated work-study programs in fostering job-ready graduates. Recommendations include stakeholder engagement, resource allocation, and policy incentives to enhance collaboration.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In today's fast-evolving economy, the concept of digital literacy has transcended beyond the realm of basic computer skills to encompass a much broader and more complex set of competencies. Digital literacy is no longer confined to operating a computer or using simple applications; it now entails the ability to effectively navigate, analyze, and engage with information across multiple digital platforms. These skills are foundational for both personal and professional success, especially as digital technologies become more deeply ingrained in every facet of life. From social interactions to career advancements, digital literacy is a critical enabler in an increasingly interconnected world.

1.1 Background

Advancements in technology in recent decades are taking place faster than anyone can comprehend. Artificial intelligence (AI), analytics with big data, cloud computing, and the Internet of Things (IoT) represent some of the advancements not just dictating business transactions but also determining the skills needed to thrive in these environments. Advanced technology adoption by organizations has greatly shifted in the expectation at the work pace, and the market demands to use these tools to resolve strategic problems for making decisions on strategy involving change and innovation necessary (Jones, 2022). Thus, there is a big need for education systems to be aligned with market trends, producing a new brand of digirati graduates to face the challenges of their future in the area of technology.

The virtuous condition to digital literacy has left a big gap in advanced digital skills that students have acquired during their higher studies compared to what employers usually expect as part of knowledge on the employment ladder. Researchers have been consistent in pointing to the mismatch showing that it is so many times the case that when most graduates go to the labor market, they are highly incompetent in digital knowledge when to compare what their roles would expect in skills and expertise (Taylor, Liu, & Smith, 2020). Not only does this problem affect individual career trajectories, but it also becomes a guilt on employers who are forced to get additional means of remediation into training and upskilling of employees. It's also because of the rapid evolution of technology, which in most cases leaves educational curricula trailing behind and utterly disconnected between the learning and industry demand.

Higher education institutions have always been known and considered as the bastions of skill-building and the dissemination of knowledge. However, the aspect of these institutions if preparing for students to enter the digital age needs to be excluded. Gone are the days where schools can solely teach theories, as what