Information and Communication Technology Literacy of Pre-service Special Education Teachers in ODL Programmes: A Critical Examination

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Abstract

This study examines the ICT literacy of pre-service Special Education prospective teachers enrolled in the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) mode at Tamil Nadu Open University, India. A total of 247 out of 370 B.Ed. Special Education trainees participated in the research. Data were gathered through an online survey and analyzed using descriptive statistical tools such as percentage analysis, mean, median, standard deviation, and t-test. The results indicate that approximately half of the participants exhibit an average level of ICT literacy. Interestingly, the remaining half is equally split between high and low levels of ICT competency. This distribution highlights a critical gap: nearly one-fourth of the trainees may struggle with basic digital tools and e-resources, which are essential for effective teaching and learning in inclusive classrooms. Given the increasing integration of technology in education, especially in special education contexts, these findings raise important concerns about the readiness of future teachers to leverage ICT in their professional practice. Teachers with limited ICT skills may find it challenging to plan and deliver lessons, access digital content, and provide accommodations for diverse learners. To bridge this gap, it is imperative to implement regular, structured ICT training sessions as part of the ODL curriculum. Such initiatives would help build essential digital competencies, ensuring that teacher trainees are better equipped to integrate technology into their teaching and cater to the varied needs of learners with disabilities. Continuous professional development in ICT can enhance classroom engagement, improve learning outcomes, and support inclusive education practices.

Keywords: Pre-service teachers, ICT Literacy, Open and Distance Learning