

# Exploring the Strategic Role of Higher Education in Human Resource Development in Education: A Qualitative Case Study of Tribhuvan University

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## Abstract

*The purpose of this study is to explore how Tribhuvan University, Faculty of Education, uses its academic programs, policies and strategic initiatives to support the development of qualified human resources in the education system of Nepal. The study employed a qualitative case study research design to conduct an empirical investigation, involving the participation of assistant dean, chairs of subject committee; department heads and students from Mahendra Ratna Campus, Tahachal. The results show that The Faculty of Education should prioritize pedagogy-based Bachelor's and Master's degrees with career assurances and regular monitoring mechanisms, it faces challenges in human resource development due to inconsistent affiliation licenses, students and teachers are dissatisfied with the Faculty of Education's policies and programs, which fail to consider their needs and socioeconomic backgrounds, leading to poor implementation and low pass rates, and it is urged to improve policy implementation by empowering subject committees, aligning curricula with market demands, prioritizing pedagogy-based degrees. The Faculty of Education is crucial in matching its academic programs with the demands of the country in terms of human resource development, but there is still room for improvement in a few areas, including infrastructure, curriculum updates, and closer ties between theoretical knowledge and real-world application. TU Faculty of Education is crucial to producing a trained workforce that can fulfill Nepal's changing educational needs and promote the nation's socioeconomic development.*

**Keywords:** Higher education, human resource development, qualitative case study, strategic role, Tribhuvan University,

## Introduction

One of the most important national assets for raising economic competitiveness is higher education (Asian Development Bank, 2014). Tribhuvan University (TU), the country's first university, was established in 1959 with the objectives of advancing knowledge, emphasizing research, and conserving Nepalese cultural heritage. It gives young people sophisticated knowledge to prepare them for the demands of contemporary society. The "Vision 2030" paper focuses on three main strategies: raising TU's global ranking, strengthening academic quality, and transforming TU into a Central University with independent campuses and schools. It also suggests that these initiatives be put into action with a robust support system. (Tribhuvan University, 2019). In order to build competitive human resources, higher education is essential. To address issues and improve quality, the globalized era's increasingly complex dynamics call for creative management ((Tusriyanto et al., 2024). A key factor in developing highly skilled and competitive human resources is higher education.

Education is crucial for economic growth and socioeconomic development, with short-term policies focusing on awareness programs, while long-term education is linked to HRD and overall socioeconomic progress (Dahal, 2016). A nation's economic prosperity depends on its investment in human resources since human capital is the foundation of growth. Since education is essential to human growth, developing nations must prioritize human resource development (Ekka, 2023). With the power to change a country in a generation, higher education is vital for the development of a country. It is a capital investment that is necessary for the advancement of the economy, society, and culture (Upadhyay, 2018). By producing the human resources needed to manage the nation's resources, higher education is essential to progress as a nation. With a passing percentage of roughly 20%, Tribhuvan University is in charge of nearly 80% of the students and campuses in Nepal.

In today's globalized world, quality higher education is crucial, yet Nepali institutions struggle with issues such as a lack of competent staff and limited infrastructure. Since 2007, the UGC has been implementing the Quality Assurance and Accreditation (QAA) system to guarantee minimum academic requirements. The monitoring system is deficient, and the accreditation process has been slow while being essential for competitiveness. In response, UGC intends to create a Strategic Plan to improve Nepal's QAA system based on suggestions from the education quality assurance accreditation council (University Grants Commission, 2021). An organization's workforce's knowledge and abilities are essential to its productivity, innovation, and competitiveness (Tharenou et al., 2007). Human resource management and strategy are being severely influenced by the dynamic capabilities approach. In order to generate competent and competitive human resources, higher education is essential. The complexity of higher education in today's

globalized world calls for creative management techniques to address issues and improve quality (Tusriyanto et al., 2024).

Success in higher education is largely dependent on the competence of the workforce, and HRD procedures improve academic achievement. However, there aren't many empirical HRD researches in this field. Universities are urged by the study to create HRD plans in order to boost worker productivity and meet organizational objectives (Kareem & Hussein, 2019). In every organization setting, managing human capital and developing human resources are equally crucial. The development of human resources enhances the abilities and expertise of workers to achieve objectives. The higher education system, however, is outdated and unprepared for the problems of contemporary society. Higher education institutions require strategic human resource management programs in order to remain productive and creative. In order to meet obstacles and realize the NEP 2020 vision and Industry 4.0 goals, it is important that educational leaders and instructors receive the necessary training and development (Gupta & Gupta, 2022a). NEP 2020 envisions high-quality universities as a means of promoting economic growth and sustainable living. It seeks to produce creative, well-rounded people by encouraging individual development, civic engagement, and society contribution. Students should be prepared for meaningful work, happy lives, and financial independence through higher education.

Nepal faces a significant gap in university academic programs, with traditional farming insufficient for rural livelihoods. To address this, the country should focus on modern farming, agribusiness, tourism, and hydropower (Asian Development Bank, 2014). The Poverty Reduction Strategic Plan emphasizes human resource development in key sectors, requiring better coordination and monitoring to bridge the gap between higher education and labor market needs. A study in Nepal found poor alignment between Tribhuvan University's teacher education (TE) and the Teacher Service Commission's (TSC) training courses, suggesting the need for overhauling TE programs, integrating societal dynamics courses, and fostering collaboration (Panthee et al., 2023). There are significant problems with human resources in developing societies: a fast-growing population, rising rates of underemployment and unemployment, a lack of skilled labor, poor labor mobilizing organizations, and a lack of incentives for essential national development initiatives.

As a result of globalization and technical innovations, human capital development is crucial for sustained economic success. Producing knowledgeable professionals who support organizational and economic growth is mostly dependent on higher education. Still, there are a lot of obstacles to overcome, like restricted access to universities, insufficient funding, and curriculum that don't match the needs of the job market (Adedjei & Campbell, 2014). Nepal's Higher Education Policy, 2015, aims to improve technical and vocational education, but its centralized structure may hinder progress. Future legal frameworks must align with the constitution, global trends, and societal needs (Baral, 2016). When

a policy successfully handles problems in its field, it is successful. The recent policy on higher education is at a turning point, ready to show how important it is. For any country to develop its ability and produce new knowledge, higher education is essential. Thus, this study has emphasized addressing such issues related to the strategic role of higher education in human resource development in the education system of Nepal.

### **The Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to explore how Tribhuvan University (TU), Faculty of Education, uses its academic programs, policies, and strategic initiatives to assist the development of qualified human resources in Nepal's education sector. Based on the purpose of the study, the following research questions are formulated.

- How do the academic programs offered by Tribhuvan University's Faculty of Education contribute to the development of qualified human resources in Nepal's education sector?
- What does the Faculty of Education at Tribhuvan University's policy and strategic initiative promote for the development of qualified human resources for Nepal's educational system?

### **Review of Literature**

The discipline of human resource development (HRD) is a relatively new area of academic research and practical application. The dynamic nature of work, influenced by globalization and technology, highlights the necessity of HRD strategies that improve employee competencies. The study encourages institutions to implement HRD strategies for better results because it demonstrates a high correlation between HRD, employee performance, and organizational effectiveness (Kareem & Hussein, 2019). The key conclusion is that HR's strategic involvement is vital in making institutions more adaptive, inclusive, and forward-thinking. The review advocates for a more integrated and strategic role of HR in academic settings to effectively transform educational outcomes.

In academic institutions, creative human resource strategies are critical to faculty development. The study emphasizes the value of strategic HRD planning in fostering a knowledgeable, flexible workforce. It focuses on talent retention, faculty development initiatives, and the leadership's role in fostering ongoing learning and development (Nancy Al-Hamad et al., 2023). The Science, Technology, and Innovation Policy 2019 in Nepal places a strong emphasis on developing qualified human resources through contemporary, research-oriented education, while the National Education Policy 2019 prioritizes digital education through ICT for equitable quality education and integrated EMIS for improved governance.(University Grants Commission, 2022). UGC has established important guidelines for the digitalization of Nepal's higher education system, covering both more

general and specific areas: broadly speaking, the digitization of higher education aims to adopt new methods and tools, improve quality, promote digital culture, assure accessibility, and supplement traditional education. Technically speaking, it guarantees that students will have access to current, non-plagiarized digital content that is in line with the curriculum, as well as regulated user access and secure, continuous service (University Grants Commission, 2022).

Successful human resource management and development strategies and competency deployment in a changing environment are essential for maintaining a competitive edge. Line managers plan and carry out policies under centralized human resource decisions in Nepal. Organizations in Nepal are beginning to understand the value of people management, even though HRM procedures are not as developed as they are in wealthy nations (Gautam, 2012). Although there has been considerable progress in recent years—such as the creation of human resource departments, the appointment of dedicated managers, and the incorporation of HR strategies into corporate planning—human resource management in Nepalese enterprises is still in its infancy.

Higher education institutions need to integrate knowledge management strategies into their HR policies and practices to foster knowledge-sharing culture and improve cohesion (Govender et al., 2018). The study concludes that putting new ideas into practice is essential for quality improvement in response to the complex dynamics of higher education. The development of human resources, market cooperation, clear communication, and technology use are important success factors (Tusriyanto et al., 2024). For organizations to sustain a competitive advantage through efficient knowledge handling, knowledge management (KM) is essential. It is aided by human resource management (HRM), which encourages employees to create and share knowledge. Integrating HRM and KM in business education equips students to manage organizational knowledge. KM and HRM-aligned educational objectives assist give students the tools they need for acquiring and applying knowledge in corporations (Brewer & Brewer, 2010). The goal of education must be to create knowledge workers who can succeed in a cutthroat, international workplace. Prioritizing the development, enhancement, and assessment of human resources' knowledge, skills, and abilities should be a top priority for HRM programs and curriculum.

Higher education is essential for producing skilled workers and stimulating the economy in order to create a knowledge-based economy in the face of globalization and technological progress. But obstacles including poor funding, restricted access, and a mismatch between the demands of the labor market and academic programs impede advancement public-private partnerships, are recommended as a means of enhancing the effectiveness of the educational system and raising returns on investments made in higher education (Adedeji & Campbell, 2014). Higher education is essential for creating new knowledge and growing national capability, but for it to work, access must be made more

widely available, financing issues must be overcome, and the skills gap between graduates and labor market demands must be closed.

Knowledge is crucial for economic growth and innovation in the 21st century, surpassing traditional labor and natural resource reliance, and higher education is essential for fostering this knowledge economy. Globally, strategies for enhancing higher education include institutional diversification, promoting science and technology, building research capacity, expanding ICT use, supporting lifelong learning, and fostering public-private partnerships. (Asian Development Bank, 2014). In order to achieve marriage and well-being, sustainable development proposes a harmonious interaction between humans and the environment. It calls for quick technical expertise and answers to societal problems. Achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 of Agenda 2030—which calls for inclusive, equitable, and high-quality lifelong learning—requires education that is based in ethics (Ports, 2018). Universities must improve human capital planning to forecast future needs accurately, ensuring they have the right faculty at the right time to avoid talent deficits.

The study explores Nepal's unique higher education context, emphasizing its role in economic transformation and social mobility. It emphasizes the need for curriculum alignment with economic and social demands, integrating social justice, arts, culture, and technology (Bista et al., 2019). The study indicates that in order to improve higher education management in the face of its complexity, creative techniques must be successfully implemented. The development of human resources, industry collaboration, effective communication, and technology usage are important pillars that lead institutions toward success (Tusriyanto et al., 2024). Through internal and external examinations, quality assurance (QA) in higher education makes sure that academic standards are continuously maintained and enhanced. External quality assurance systems necessitate validation and credibility, frequently incorporating third-party assessments that improve their worth and reliability (UNESCO, 2022). Major parts of the global higher education scene have improved, such as learning progression, access, quality assurance, and some aspects of equity.

In higher education institutions, inadequate governance, corruption, and a deficiency of strong quality assurance measures result in poor academic performance. These problems undercut the contribution that higher education institutions provide to the nation's development by generating a workforce with the necessary skills. Universities were able to overcome financial challenges, enhance performance, and produce more research due to their autonomy and market-driven reforms. The goal of implementing business process reengineering (BPR) was to increase productivity (Varghese, 2013). The demands of the work market and higher education frequently mismatch. Because graduates lack the required training or real-world experience, there is a significant rate of unemployment and underemployment among degree holders. This disparity limits the ability of higher



education to provide a workforce with the necessary skills (Robertson et al., 2011). Higher education's contribution to the development of local human resources has been hampered by the brain drain the outflow of highly educated and skilled people to advanced countries. The workforce is drained by this talent migration, which also limits the growth of regional economies (Docquier & Rapoport, 2012). The current trend in international migration is high-skill mobility, also known as "brain drain," which increases inequality. Global inequality is increasing as a result of talent being transferred from developing countries to high-income nations, where it is already plentiful, making human capital even more scarce in these countries.

Significant obstacles confronting the education sector include low relevance and a lack of graduates in critical disciplines like science, ICT, agribusiness, and energy. Technical fields enroll only 13% of pupils. The quality is low due to out-of-date curricula, inadequate quality assurance methods, and a lack of emphasis on innovation and research. Additionally, internal efficiency is still low (The world Bank, 2021). The semester system, praised for its innovative nature, faces challenges like missed deadlines, poor attendance, subjective grading, irrelevant materials, outdated methods, and lack of support for economically disadvantaged students, requiring policymakers to reconsider implementation strategies (Neupane, 2023). The present system is antiquated and ill-suited to meet the difficulties. Strong strategic HRM strategies must be implemented by higher education institutions (HEIs) in order to enhance their academic services. To achieve the objectives of the policy, professors and educational leaders must receive training (Gupta & Gupta, 2022).

## **Theories of Human Resource Development**

### ***System Theory***

According to this theory, organizations—including educational institutions—are made up of interconnected, complex systems. It highlights the necessity of a comprehensive strategy for HRD, taking into account how many elements (including culture, policy, and practice) affect HRD in the context of education. The system theory of HRD, which was created by Jacobs (2014), describes an organization as a system that is set up to accomplish specific objectives. According to this idea, the processes, inputs, and outputs of an organization all play a part in accomplishing its objectives and running its day-to-day operations. An organization's material assets, staff, finances, and other components are referred to as "inputs" when discussing them.

### ***Competency-based Education and Training***

This strategy focuses on identifying the exact competencies needed for various education-related tasks and creating training plans that guarantee instructors obtain these competencies. It places a strong emphasis on quantifiable results and useful abilities related

to the field of education. Human resources are valuable assets in a knowledge-based economy. According to the theory of human capital, investing in them produces sustainability and a competitive advantage. For success in a complicated economic landscape, organizations and HRD professionals should strategically invest in human capital (Wuttaphan, 2017). Employee attitudes and human capital have an impact on the link between training and corporate performance. The universalistic view of strategic HR management is supported by the fact that training is more effective when it is in line with organizational characteristics such as capital intensity and strategy (contingency perspective). However, it also has an independent impact on outcomes (Tharenou et al., 2007).

## **Research Methods and Materials**

Enhancing the effectiveness of Nepalese higher education institutions requires an understanding of the relationship between the strategic role of higher education and human resource development. The main purpose of the study is to explore how Tribhuvan University, Faculty of Education used its academic programs, policies and strategic initiatives to support the development of qualified human resources in Nepal's education sector. This study employed a qualitative research approach and case study method, involving the participation of the assistant dean, subject committee chairs, department heads and students from the Master's in Education programs at Mahendra Ratna Campus, Tahachal, Kathmandu. All academic staff, students, departments, and university management were part of the study's population. The study is based on the concept of multiple realities. Open-ended, unstructured questions were used to gather information from primary sources, which included an assistant dean, two chairs of subject committees, two department heads (to examine the strategic role of higher education in human resource development (HRD) and five students (to understand their perceptions of higher education's strategic role in HRD in education) at Mahendra Ratna Campus Tahachal. A purposive sampling was applied to get precise and complete information from the participants. The process of analyzing qualitative data is linear rather than step-by-step, with data collection and analysis occur at the same time (Bogie & Sekaran, 2019). To identify the major themes, analyze them, and create a final report, the study employed thematic analysis of the data. The data was coded, condensed, and provided for analysis by the researcher.

## **Discussions and Findings**

During the interviews, assistant dean, chairs of subject committees, and department heads were asked about how the academic programs offered by Tribhuvan University's Faculty of Education contribute to the development of qualified human resources in Nepal's education sector? Their responses were as follows:



*Subject committee chairs, department directors, and other officials claim that while the Faculty of Education has implemented new policies and programs, their incompetent management has made it difficult for them to be implemented effectively. This can be linked to the leadership in the faculty, which plays a crucial role in initiating strategic plans for the education sector's human resource development. In order to promote bottom-up reform, leadership should give subject committees and department heads the authority to alter courses and curriculum. But at the moment, the Faculty is operating in a top-down manner. To ensure their efficacy, policies and programs need to be coordinated between the Faculty and the Ministry of Education and matched with the needs of the market and students. The two-year Bachelor's degree was more in line with the needs of the job market when it offered two areas of specialization. The existing four-year bachelor's program, which only offers one major and one minor, is out of line with these requirements. Furthermore, a large number of candidates to the Faculty of Education are below average and have a preference for common topics over science and math.*

*The Faculty of Education's haphazard affiliation licenses are inappropriate for efficient human resource development. Implementing need-based and quota-based programs should come after manpower planning in the education sector. Despite the Faculty's introduction of strategic initiatives such as six-semester social studies programs, postgraduate semester systems, ICT in education, and semester-based Master's programs, their effective implementation has been hindered by a lack of consideration for the needs of students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. Establishing a regular monitoring and evaluation strategy is necessary for successful implementation. Higher education must be merit-based, as it is not meant for everyone. It has been difficult for the Faculty of Education to evolve its curriculum, enhance the quality of its instructors, or openly disclose the admissions procedure for its Master's and Bachelor's degrees. According to a need-based quota system, admissions should be made by job demands. Employment and education are not two distinct ideas, but rather are related. Instead of only exchanging information, students should participate in deep learning to generate knowledge. It should be possible for graduates of the Faculty of Education to create employment prospects in the market. The vertical and horizontal alignment of the curriculum must be enhanced, as there is now a gap between school and university-level curricula.*

*With career assurances through in-service options, the Faculty of Education should concentrate on pedagogy-based one-year Bachelor's and one-year Master's degrees. Mechanisms for routine observation and assessment must be set up. Currently, students are attending schools outside the valley where subject teachers and suitable infrastructure are lacking, leading to worries about the external*

*effectiveness of these programs. This might harm the actual value of education by reducing universities to nothing more than places to distribute certificates.*

*Key operational strategies that are intended to match academic programs with local, national and international educational demands should be highlighted by education officials. They may highlight partnerships with international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and government agencies that improve program content and support in the creation of a workforce of educators with more skill. They can also put more emphasis on quality assurance programs, which guarantee high academic standards and result in the development of qualified teachers and professionals for Nepal's educational system. The majority of participants said that TU's programs in the Faculty of Education are in line with federal objectives for education, like raising the quality of teachers and increasing access to education in rural areas. They emphasized the value of faculty members as a major supply of qualified teachers who can meet the needs for human resources, especially in underprivileged areas. Certain department heads and chairs of subject committees noticed deficiencies in their training, particularly insufficient exposure to contemporary teaching technologies and issues in education. The education faculty of TU plays a crucial role in promoting national priorities in education by coordinating its strategic initiatives with those of the government, including enhancing teacher quality and increasing access to education in rural areas.*

During the interviews, participants were asked about the Faculty of Education at Tribhuvan University's policy and strategic initiative to promote the development of qualified human resources for Nepal's educational system. Their responses were as follows:

*As said by students, the needs and socioeconomic backgrounds of students are not taken into consideration by the policies and programs of the Faculty of Education, which have not been executed properly. Both students and teachers may share some of the responsibility for the lack of success in the teaching and learning processes. The initiatives have not been working well, giving teachers and kids nothing to do. The Faculty of Education's strategies and initiatives are operating in a "kam chalu" mode. The execution of these efforts has made regular students unhappy, who blame low pass rates in all subjects, an excessively demanding curriculum, and a lack of flexibility. There are no incentives, little support for students from different backgrounds, and no chance of employment or student attraction. The Faculty of Education has not offered support or information regarding its guidelines or initiatives. There are no encouraging or helpful activities available for the students; hence, the situation is static.*

*Students expressed that the academic programs offered by TU's faculty of education have enhanced their confidence as future teachers by providing them with pedagogical skills and subject-matter expertise. Some expressed worries about their lack of practical experience and out-of-date materials, which are hindering their preparation for the teaching field. They also emphasized how they may become more competitive in job markets by promoting training, research, and professional placement options. They claim that producing highly qualified instructors is facilitated by an intentional focus on continuing faculty development and the evolution of instructional practices. They highlighted the need to collaborate with local as well as global partners to improve academic standards and introduce students to international educational trends. They stressed how these initiatives make up for a lack of resources and integrate innovative pedagogy into the curriculum. The faculty of education policy at TU offer research possibilities and practical training, which have been acknowledged by some students and graduates. However, they also recommended advancements in innovative instructional technologies and practical learning, which they believe are crucial for addressing today's educational issues.*

The policies and strategies of TU's Faculty of Education have improved somewhat, but upgrading training techniques is still lacking in order to adequately prepare upcoming teachers for Nepal's changing educational demands. Tribhuvan University's Faculty of Education efficiently trains teachers through curriculum alignment, professional development, and strategic planning; yet, however, innovative teaching techniques and real-world experience are still required.

The findings of the first research question suggest that the Faculty of Education faces challenges in human resource development due to inconsistent affiliation licenses. To improve, a need-based quota system should align admissions with job demands, and curriculum alignment between school and university levels is crucial. Regular monitoring and addressing diverse socioeconomic needs are also necessary. Prioritizing pedagogy-based one-year Bachelor's and Master's degrees with career certainties and creating regular monitoring mechanisms should be the top priority of the Faculty of Education. The fact that students are already attending institutions outside of the valley with inadequate faculty and facilities raises questions about the efficacy of the programs offered and diminishes the real value of education to the issuance of certificates. This result is in line with the study by Nancy AI Hamad et al. (2023), UNESCO (2022), Asian Development Bank (2014), and contradicts Gautam (2012).

The findings of the second research question suggest that the students and teachers are dissatisfied with the Faculty of Education's policies and programs, which fail to consider their needs and socioeconomic backgrounds, leading to poor implementation and

low pass rates. The lack of incentives and support for diverse backgrounds, coupled with limited guidance and encouraging activities, results in a stagnant situation. The Faculty of Education's implementation of new policies and programs is hampered by inefficient management and a top-down strategy; instead, subject committees should be given more authority by the leadership to drive bottom-up reforms and match curricula to the needs of the market. This result aligns with the study by Kareem and Hussein (2019), Tusriyanto et al. (2024), Bista et al. (2019), and against with Adedeji and Campbell (2014).

The Faculty of Education faces challenges due to inefficient management and a top-down approach, resulting in ineffective policy implementation. To address these issues, leadership should empower subject committees for bottom-up reforms and align curricula with market needs. Human resource development should be prioritized, with a need-based quota system for admissions and curriculum alignment. Policies should also address students' needs and socioeconomic backgrounds. This strategy is in line with theories of human resource development that seek to strengthen the strategic role and functions of Tribhuvan University's Faculty of Education in the field of education.

## **Conclusions**

The study's major conclusion is that Tribhuvan University's (TU) Faculty of Education, through its academic programs, policies, and strategic initiatives, contributes significantly to the development of qualified human resources in Nepal's education sector. While TU's policies and activities seek to improve teacher training and educational leadership, its curriculum and programs are created to meet the needs of the country's schools. To better fulfill the needs of Nepal's education sector, the study also points out areas that require development, such as updating curricula, enhancing infrastructure, and establishing a stronger connection between academic instruction and real-world application. Improving the effectiveness of Nepal's educational system requires an understanding of the relationship between the Faculty of Education, human resource development, and higher education's strategic role. This helps the Faculty of Education at TU to match policies and programs to the demands of the job market, resulting in the formation of a trained workforce that advances socioeconomic advancement and supports national growth.

The Faculty of Education at Tribhuvan University should consistently adapt and enhance its curricula and policies to remain in line with the changing demands of Nepal's educational landscape. To guarantee outstanding education, it is necessary to strengthen the relationships between higher education and the workforce, improve the actual implementation of educational ideas, and make investments in faculty development. To further support human resource development in education, TU should also think about implementing additional strategic initiatives that center on innovative teaching strategies, technological integration, and better resource allocation. This will contribute to the

production of graduates who are prepared to take on the opportunities and difficulties presented by Nepal's educational system. This study could lead in revised curricula, updated instructional strategies, and improved digital literacy. The results of the study might emphasize the necessity of increased practical training and ongoing professional growth.

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