



YOUNG LEADERS ADVISORY COUNCIL
LE CONSEIL CONSULTATIF DES JEUNES LEADERS

Black Youth and Digital Literacy In Canada

Context

INTERNATIONAL DECADE STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN: 2017-2024

It serves as a roadmap for communities across the country to work with stakeholders to improve social and economic outcomes for Black Canadians over the course of the International Decade of People of African Descent.

The National Black Canadians Summit was convened from the clarion call of over thirty emerging artists of African descent, residing in Halifax, Toronto, and Montreal, whose artwork, thanks to the support of the Michaëlle Jean Foundation, was featured in educational exhibitions dubbed 4th Wall: Make the Invisible Visible.

As a groundbreaking study of Black Canadians residing in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), the Black Experience Project research paints a comprehensive portrait of the Black Canadian experience, which echoes many views conveyed in the 4th Wall exhibitions

“In socioeconomic terms, the situation of Black individuals is not on par with the rest of the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) population. Compared with the non-Black population, the Black population in the Toronto CMA has lower incomes. Black individuals are also slightly less likely to be employed and a bit less likely to be in the labor force (which includes those currently categorized as unemployed)”, reports the Black Experience Project (p. 26). In addition, the study indicates, “Fully one-third of participants identify challenges linked to being Black and to navigating anti-Black racism in the workplace, whether it involves explicit racism and discrimination or an

uncomfortable workplace culture in which they do not feel they are treated professionally or accepted (p. 41).”

Key Issues:

- Limited access to start-up capital, investments, debt ratios and high interest rates.
- Lack of upward employment mobility stifling earning potential.
- Second and third generation Black students performing worse than their immigrant parents, leaving two generations of Black students unprepared for the professional job market.
- Lack of information in schools and in communities regarding strategic money management.
- Lack of business skills and expertise, weak business culture, lack of access to capital, and financial literacy programs and technology education.
- Limited understanding of the power of real estate and the importance of owning neighborhoods as well as residential, commercial and institutional buildings.

A writer once said "William Gibson put it: “The future is here already; it just isn’t evenly distributed” (1) However, despite closing existing inequality gaps, we still see a big divide in the socio-economic, technological and linguistic status of person needs to be overcome. Existing social inequality gaps with respect to digital literacy is still noticeable with respect to socio-economic status, gender, age, ethnicity and geographical location. (DiMaggio and Hargittai, 2001; Wellman and Haythornthwaite, 2002; Whitaker, 1999)

The Internet as we know is the gateway to job search, acquiring information, civic engagement and creating and developing new business ideas. However, most racialized groups like black youth across Ontario can't access the Internet because of its high cost, lack digital literacy, transportation access that prevent them from using the internet to their full potential. As we engage racialized groups (i.e. black youths), it is important to note that bridging the digital divide is even more complicated that provided computers and access to internet services.

With the notion that access does not necessarily equal use, it is important to understand that in spite of physical access being a barrier, social and technological factors are barriers to digital literacy. The 2003 International Telecommunication Union (ITU) study found that school enrollment and attainment and language diversity are some identifiable indicators of knowledge-based barriers to the use of Internet and access

When looking at the digital divide with respect to socio-economic status, there is an increasingly large divide between high income and low-income households. More boys are more likely to access and use the Internet or receive some form of digital literacy skills than girls. Young black youth living in rural and most central areas are more likely to access and use internet than those in suburban cities irrespective of their social economic status (Fong, et al., 2001)

Digital literacy - the technological use of the Internet brings to mind the divide between having access to Internet and the ability to use the Internet to our full potential. By bridging this divide to the advantage of racialized populations, we must be able to provide these groups with the basic computer and cognitive skills to be able to use the Internet in a meaningful way to their greatest advantage (e.g career development, information sharing and seeking, civic engagement)

However, in some cases the digital divide may be as a result of lack of awareness or interest in the digital world but in cases where the awareness and interest exist, some of the digital online content being accessed by racialized populations is not relevant to their daily lives with regards to job searches/opportunities, accessing local events and other community needs. Therefore, understanding who uses the internet, for what purposes, under what circumstances and how digital literacy affects social cohesion and inclusion, businesses will be able to create a pipeline to quality employment and earning disparities

The notion that the digital economy bridges the social inequality gap can be misleading. We must ask ourselves if digital literacy through access and use of internet serves as an enabler which is helping disadvantaged groups attain their full potential by accessing opportunities or whether it is further enhancing the development of social inequalities through hindering access due to cost.

Digital literacy through access to Internet has shown to empower disadvantaged groups to help them tap into previously unattainable resources for economic growth and social development e.g. selling handcrafts online, connecting them to consumers

Relationship building through trust when working with racialized populations could be challenging. Existing gaps may widen with respect to access to social network and special capital of social

In 2017, the Ministry of Advance Education and Skills Development (MAESD) hosted a Literacy and Basic Skills Symposium Oct 5-6th on ways to strengthen, improve and increase support and services to Ontarians

Target groups

- Young people under 19 year - they finish school with little or no knowledge around digital literacy and cant enter a particulate program because they lack digital skills. More youth are graduating earlier from high school and need skills upgrading however, they are too young to participate in Literacy Basic Skills
- Newcomers: Need to upgrade their skills but may not be able to enter a particular program because they lack proficiency in French and English
- Learners who need strong digital literacy skills - lack of proficiency with computers make it hard to learn online
- Some learn slowly and they need that additional support

Digital Literacy – there us really no common definition. Some understand it as computational thinking, coding, e-literacy, media literacy, ICT skills, STEM etc and over time the concept of digital literacy changes

What does it really means from a labor market perspective

Canada's key priorities/recommendations - lately has focused on innovation and creating a pool of local digital –talents. However the problem is the lack of precision

Coding - essential skill for the economy of the future

Problem–: the term coding is vague and doesn't present good understanding about digital literacy and the skills needed by the digital economy by 2020

What to do?

- Really define what Digital Literacy means to Black youth and the skills it compresses of
- How it can influence the digital economy and how it can be used to transform the nature of work and the workplace
- Promotion of digital literacy from kinder garden to the workforce

Canada long-term goal is to be come the digital economy of the 21st century but is not there yet. There is lack of a common definition among educations policy makers and how o measure it

Shopify is a complete ecommerce solution that allows you to set up an **online** store to sell your goods. It lets you organize your products, customize your storefront, accept credit card payments, track and respond to orders — all with a few clicks of the mouse.

- Awareness piece - Demystify what digital literacy means
- Lack of Disaggregated data with regards Internet access and who benefits to improve service coordination between the network and the services provided to learners.
- Gaps in Learner support
- Lack of transportation access
- Lack of support services for slow learners or those with a learning disability
- No direct pathway to job employment/or job readiness

What digital skills that are most needed by Canadian children and youth?

Recommendation

- Digital Literacy Pathway Program – that empowers black youth and high schools on digital literacy. Shopify through its model or mandate can help provide us the tools and its platform to close this gap
- Partnership opportunities with community organizations that provide programs kids (after school programs) about digital literacy to black youth
- Mentorship opportunity that link black youth to select few black owned businesses
- Skills training