

Fostering proficient digital citizens: Communication and media studies as a gateway in Sri Lanka

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Digital technology has become an integral part of modern life, demanding new competencies from citizens. This study explores the potential of integrating digital citizenship skills (DCS) into Sri Lanka's secondary school Communication and Media Studies (CMS) curriculum as new competencies are demanded in digital society. Although digital engagement among students is increasing, formal education lacks a structured approach to Digital Citizenship Education (DCE). Using Ribble and Park's (2022) S3 framework (Safe, Savvy, Social) and qualitative content analysis, the study evaluates the extent to which current CMS curriculum for Grades 10 and 11 addresses DCS. Findings show that while CMS provides some relevant foundations, the coverage is fragmented and insufficient across key domains of digital safety, critical literacy, and responsible online behaviour. The study recommends that the CMS curriculum should be significantly improved to foster digital citizenship by integrating content on DCS through revising curriculum objectives to explicitly integrate DCS, offering teacher training in DCE, implementing assessment tools, and aligning content with global standards. It also highlights the importance of contextual learning and cross-curricular collaboration. These measures aim to position CMS as a pivotal platform for nurturing informed, ethical, and digitally competent students in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: *Digital citizenship (DC), Digital citizenship skills (DCS), Digital citizenship education (DCE), Curriculum integration, Communication and media studies (CMS)*