

Digital Immigrants: How to Survive in an Open and Distance Learning Environment (A Semi-Structured Literature review)

K.A.D. Sandamali*

The Open University of Sri Lanka, Nugegoda, 11222, Sri Lanka

**kasan@ou.ac.lk*

Digital immigrants, who were not born in a digital world, face a challenge in adapting to the present digitalized learning environment. It is more challenging for them to survive in an Open and Distance Learning (ODL) environment, which is commonly utilized in every national university in the post-Covid 19 era. Therefore, it is crucial for both teachers and digital immigrant students in higher education to understand emerging challenges in their learning environments and how to overcome those challenges. This study was conducted as a semi-structured literature review based on two objectives: to examine the challenges faced by digital immigrants in an ODL environment and to investigate strategies to mitigate those challenges and become active learners. After formulating the research objectives, the literature was examined using key words such as digital immigrants, higher education, open and distance learning, and challenges faced by digital immigrants. 66 articles were identified under the process of identification which was done through database searching. 20 articles were included in this review after excluding the articles that are not relevant to the present research scope. Most of the literature was presented in online journals and after a thorough investigation, analysis, synthesis and disseminating the findings were done. The data gathered through the systematic review was analyzed under two themes (Challenges faced by Digital Immigrants in an ODL environment & Strategies to mitigate Challenges faced by Digital Immigrants in an ODL environment) utilizing the thematic analysis method. The findings of the study revealed communication issues, lack of interaction, lack of confidence, lack of technological competency, and lack of interest as the student related challenges that are faced by digital immigrants. Connectivity issues and teacher related issues also stand as challenges for digital immigrants. Using blended learning approaches instead of limiting to online modes, utilizing social network tools, strengthening their own skills such as emotional intelligence and critical thinking, and creating authentic learning situations to relate their own experience to learning will support to mitigate the afore-mentioned challenges. Based on the research findings, it is crucial to identify the nature of the learning styles of digital immigrants and their expectations towards learning methods when facilitating them in an ODL environment. Using effective blended learning methods and providing continuous guidance with authentic examples will enable them to survive in their learning journey within the ODL environment.

Keywords: Blended Learning, Digital Immigrants, Open and Distance Learning (ODL), Social Network Tools, Student Related Challenges