

ENGAGEMENT BEYOND DIGITAL ACCESS



SCAN CARD · 07

DESCRIPTION

Universities frequently rely on digital tools for community engagement — online platforms, social media, participation tools, hybrid events and collaboration software. Digitalisation is often presented as a way to scale engagement and reduce barriers.

In practice, digital tools often generate visibility rather than meaningful interaction. Attendance may increase, but dialogue and trust-building remain limited. Some community groups lack digital access; others feel overwhelmed by multiple platforms. Digital engagement can replace face-to-face interaction, creating a gap between technological capacity and relational engagement.

RELEVANCE

Digital tools are becoming central to university engagement strategies, especially under resource and time constraints. If treated as substitutes rather than enablers, they risk weakening relationships with communities.

Understanding the limits of digital engagement is crucial to avoid superficial participation and disengagement over time.

NEED

Universities need clearer criteria for when digital tools genuinely support engagement, and when in-person or hybrid approaches are necessary. Digital literacy, inclusion and facilitation skills matter as much as the technology itself.

There is also a need to simplify platforms and coordinate digital strategies. Without explicit decisions about the role of digital tools, over-reliance may contribute to superficial participation and gradual weakening of trust-based relationships.

CATEGORY

Technological · Social

SIGNAL STRENGTH

Medium



SCANNING METHOD

Practice review · Observation

SOURCES

EC (2021) Digital Education Action Plan · OECD (2022) Building Trust and Reinforcing Democracy · UNESCO (2021) Reimagining Our Futures Together