

Educational Technology Governance in Developing Countries: Strengthening Digital Quality Assurance Systems in Caribbean Higher Education

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www.sjmars.com || Vol. 4 No. 4 (2025): August Issue

Date of Submission: 03-08-2025

Date of Acceptance: 15-08-2025

Date of Publication: 31-08-2025

ABSTRACT

The expansion of digital learning across developing countries has elevated the importance of educational technology, governance and digital quality assurance. As higher-education institutions increasingly adopt online, blended, and technology-enhanced learning modalities, robust governance mechanisms are essential to protect academic integrity, safeguard learning outcomes, and promote institutional accountability. This article examines the governance challenges associated with digital learning in Caribbean higher-education institutions, focusing on standards, regulatory frameworks, infrastructural gaps, and institutional readiness. Drawing upon international digital-governance literature and regional development analyses, the article proposes a comprehensive framework for digital quality assurance suitable for small developing countries. The findings underscore the need for strengthened regulatory oversight, capacity development, cross-institutional collaboration, and learner-centred digital policies.

Keywords- Educational technology, digital governance, developing countries, quality assurance, Caribbean higher education, academic integrity, digital standards, regulatory oversight, faculty capacity building, online learning.

I. INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation in higher education has accelerated global access to learning, reshaped teaching methodologies, and expanded flexible educational opportunities. However, in developing countries, including those in the Caribbean, digital expansion has created new governance challenges relating to quality assurance, regulatory compliance, equity, and institutional capacity (UNESCO, 2021). Digital learning requires clear standards that define instructional expectations, technology requirements, assessment integrity, and learner support systems (OECD, 2020). Without these standards, institutions risk compromised academic quality and inconsistent student experiences.

Caribbean countries face specific challenges, including bandwidth limitations, digital literacy gaps, inconsistent instructional design competencies, and insufficient regulatory oversight (Caribbean Development Bank, 2022). This article examines these issues and offers a strategic model for digital quality assurance adapted to developing countries contexts.

II. CHALLENGES IN DIGITAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

1. *Inconsistent Digital Standards Across Institutions:*

Many institutions lack standardized policies for instructional design, assessment security, digital content development, and online teaching competencies (UNESCO, 2021).

2. *Technological Infrastructure Constraints:*

Bandwidth limitations, device shortages, and network instability affect instructional delivery and student satisfaction (ITU, 2022).

3. *Assessment Integrity Risks:*

Digital learning environments require integrity safeguards such as authentication protocols, proctoring systems, and plagiarism detection tools (Dawson, 2020).

4. *Limited Instructor Training in Educational Technology:*

Many faculty members lack specialized training in digital pedagogy, leading to low instructional coherence across courses (Bawa, 2021).

5. *Equity Gaps for Low-Income and Rural Learners:*

Digital expansion may unintentionally widen inequalities due to limited access to devices or reliable internet (UNDP, 2021).

III. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF DIGITAL GOVERNANCE

Digital Quality Frameworks:

Quality assurance models for technology-enhanced learning emphasize instructional coherence, technological reliability, learner support, and assessment security (Ehlers, 2020).

Technology Governance Theory:

Technology governance focuses on decision rights, accountability structures, digital risk management, and data security (Weill & Ross, 2019).

Constructivist Digital Pedagogy:

Digital learning must support active, student-centred engagement to strengthen competency development (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020).

These principles underpin effective digital-quality systems.

IV. A FRAMEWORK FOR DIGITAL QUALITY ASSURANCE IN CARIBBEAN HIGHER EDUCATION

1. *Institutional Digital Standards:*

Clear institutional standards should define:

- Digital pedagogy expectations.
- Assessment protocols.
- Course-review procedures.
- Accessibility requirements.

2. *Strengthened Regulatory Oversight:*

National accreditation bodies must update standards to regulate online and blended learning programs.

3. *Digital Skills and Faculty Capacity Building:*

Regular training in learning-management systems, instructional design, and digital assessment strategies ensures pedagogical consistency.

4. *Secure Digital Infrastructure:*

Investment in cybersecurity, cloud-based storage, proctoring tools, and stable networks support quality learning environments.

5. *Learner-Centred Digital Support Systems:*

Institutions must offer digital orientation, 24/7 technical support, academic advising, and mental-health resources.

6. *Monitoring, Evaluation, and Data Analytics:*

Analytics tools help track engagement, assess learning outcomes, and support evidence-based academic decisions.

Implications for Guyana and the Wider Caribbean:

A strong digital quality-assurance system can:

- Improve student success outcomes.
- Strengthen accreditation readiness.

- Enhance global recognition of qualifications.
- Support equitable digital learning access.
- Modernize national higher-education sectors.

Guyana can leverage digital governance to accelerate educational modernization and international competitiveness.

V. CONCLUSION

Digital quality assurance is essential for safeguarding the academic integrity and institutional credibility of higher-education systems in developing countries. Caribbean institutions require robust governance structures, strengthened regulatory oversight, enhanced faculty capacity, and learner-centred digital policies. Implementing these systems will ensure educational consistency, enhance student outcomes, and support long-term national development.

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