Computer Literacy among Youth in Sri Lanka

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In 2012 population census of Sri Lanka, about 4.7 million persons were identified as youth (defined as age 15-29 years) and their size equate to 23.2 per cent of the total population. They are the most dynamic group in the society. If this group receives productive education, obtain skills and competencies, wellbeing of the society could be well achieved. Of such skills, computer literacy and language competency are very vital for their development as well as to their contribution to the development. Various programs have been implemented in order to improve computer literacy among the youth in Sri Lanka.

Apparently computer literacy has increased well among all the groups in Sri Lanka, however, some groups have achieved much higher levels than others. As of 2012 population census among the youth of age 15-29 about 44% possess computer literacy. Interestingly youth in the age group 15-19 recorded the highest level of computer literacy while the least by the 25-29 age group. This indicates that the older group had a lesser opportunity at gaining computer knowledge, which is a fairly recent development in Sri Lanka. Although there was no gender difference, urban youth (58%) reported the highest computer literacy while the least by the estate youth (19%). Indicating the mal distribution of resources the youth in the Mullaitivu district (16%) reported the least literacy while youth in Colombo reported over 60%. Students in the 15-29 category had the highest level of computer literacy while the lowest attainment by the youth who were engaged in household work. Although 11% of the Sri Lankan households have internet access from home a significant variations exists at urban (25%), rural (9%) and estate (4%) sectors. A smaller proportion of population access internet from Nenasala (5%) and office (4%). However, over one-quarter of the households in Colombo district has internet access.

Apart from computers youth tend to use alternative devices for many diverse ICT related activities. At present majority of youth in Sri Lanka are glued into such devices and are engaged in Facebook, chat applications etc. Thus, new era of technology usage has emerged in Sri Lanka, which could be labelled as *'Screen age"*.

Key words: *Youth, Computer literacy, Internet*.