

AN EDUCATION PLAN USING DIGITAL MEDIA

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Abstract: This study discuss how educational software could be used in developing nations to further education. To do so, will discuss why quality education is important, how influencers can be used to raise awareness about this topic and help fundraise to find a solution, how developing countries can improve their educational systems by using digital media platforms and “distance education” techniques, and what methods used in the United States could be applied in developing countries to help them decrease analphabetism. This research will show how digital media can change the education system for our future generations to make a more positive impact in the world. For this research, will use the textual analyses, using the Rhetorical Criticism methodology. This method will help me describe, analyze, interpret, and evaluate the cultural meanings of the sources of information. The results show digital media keeps evolving with the world and lets people bring to life ideas that they have never thought possible to exist on the internet. Digital media can be used for many purposes, from digital fundraising to digital classrooms. The UN could greatly benefit from using a good digital media strategy. This field could indeed contribute to a lot of things in its attempt to achieve the goal of quality education throughout the world by 2030. Digital media can be applied in any field to achieve any goal. One of those goals could be Quality Education. More research must be conducted showing this relationship

Keywords: Education, Digital Media.

I. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Nowadays, we live in a world that is very focused on technology and social media. What we see, hear, and read in all social media platforms influence decisions made by many people daily. Our society, especially Millennials and Gen Z’ers, are heavy users of social media and look up to social media influencers. They want to do the same things that they do, buy the same products that they use, travel to the same places, and they learn virtually as well. One very effective method to improve the educational system is to educate people through digital media. Education using digital media has become more important and widespread these days because it allows students to take online classes and has increased interaction in the educational process. In this research paper, I will discuss how educational software could be used in developing nations to further education. To do so, I will discuss why quality education is important, how influencers can be used to raise awareness about this topic and help fundraise to find a solution, how developing countries can improve their educational systems by using digital media platforms and “distance education” techniques, and what methods used in the United States could be applied in developing countries to help them decrease analphabetism. This research will show how digital media can change the education system for our future generations to make a more positive impact in the world.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

There has not been a lot of research done about the direct relationship between digital media and education. As technology has been evolving at a rapid pace and education has been playing a very important role, it is important to conduct more research about how these two worlds influence one another. There has been some articles and studies related to education or different educational platforms individually, but there is not much showing the relationship and impact these modern educational techniques could have in developing countries.

According to Cohen (1999), there are four schools of thought in education: idealism, realism, pragmatism and existentialism. The article says that “In idealism, education aims to discover and develop each individual's abilities and

full moral excellence to better serve society.” Realists’ belief of an objective reality, in education, would be related to subjects like mathematics and science. Cohen states that “Pragmatists believe that reality is constantly changing and that we learn best through applying our experiences and thoughts to problems, as they arise.” Pragmatics work more in group projects, hands-on problem-solving skills, and experiments. Lastly, existentialism in education is based on a personal choice, where an individual must confront others’ points of view to prove his or her own.

There are many benefits of using educational software or “distance education methods” in developing countries. These techniques are very beneficial for each one of the four different educational schools of thought. To show the direct relationship between digital media and education four main points (must be considered). First is the importance of quality education. Second, how awareness can be raised about this topic and help fundraise to find a solution having a larger reach within seconds. Third, how distance education methods and educational software can provide quality education in developing countries. Lastly, the United States will be examined as an example for developing nations to mirror some very effective educational methods. This research will show how digital media can change the education system for our future generations to make a more positive impact in the world.

III. METHODOLOGY

For this research, I will use the textual analyses, using the Rhetorical Criticism methodology. This method will help me describe, analyze, interpret, and evaluate the cultural meanings of the sources of information.

IV. DISCUSS THE RESULTS

4.1 How Could Educational Software or Distance Learning Methods be Used in Developing Nations to Improve Education?

Historically, digital media has been around since the 80s and by 2007, 94% of the world’s media storage was digital. According to a research article titled The World’s Technological Capacity to Store, Communicate, and Compute Information, “We are living through an age in which “the generation of wealth, the exercise of power, and the creation of cultural codes came to depend on the technological capacity of societies and individuals, with information technologies as the core of this capacity.” (Hilbert, Lopez 2011). We are leaving a technological era and digital media plays a huge role. What is out on the internet has a big impact on society. Digital media has great potential and outreach.

These days, technology brings people together; digital media professionals can benefit from its resources to reach out to millions and millions of people to educate and raise awareness of the issues that the world is facing every day. Digital media is defined by Stuart (2019) as, “It blends technology with content you see, watch and read every day.” This is the reason why there is a direct relationship between education and digital media. The world has evolved, so has digital media. As Knoespel (2011) explains, “Digital media has also shaped entirely new environments for creativity and discovery where we may shape and build objects that have never before existed” (p. 53). Soon, most schools and companies will need consulting services from digital media professionals to make sure that their message is being delivered in the right way, targeting the right market, and making the world better. Digital media can be used for many purposes, from digital fundraising to digital classrooms.

4.2 Why is Quality Education Important?

The educational systems can greatly benefit from using a good digital media strategy. This field could indeed contribute to a lot of things in its attempt to achieve the goal of the UN for quality education – or Goal 4 – throughout the world by 2030. One of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals is Quality Education. The UN states that “Basic literacy skills have improved tremendously, yet bolder efforts are needed to make even greater strides for achieving universal education goals” (2017). The United Nations define Goal 4 as the foundation for creating sustainable development, improving quality of life, equip children with the tools required to create solutions to the main issues in the world. Influencers could use their reach to make a positive impact in the world.

According to the United Nations website (2017), “Over 265 million children are currently out of school and 22% of them are of primary school age.” The UN has been working hard to decrease these numbers and has already achieved equality in primary education between both genders. They also found three main reasons for the lack of quality education, mainly in rural areas, which are lack of proper training for teachers, poor conditions of schools and equipment, and equity issues in rural areas. According to the Annual UN report towards the Sustainable Development Goals, “Despite the considerable

progress on education access and participation over the past years, 262 million children and youth aged 6 to 17 were still out of school in 2017, and more than half of children and adolescents are not meeting minimum proficiency standards in reading and mathematics” (UN Economic and Social Council, 2019).

Billions of people inform and educate themselves using the internet and this number increases every year as more and more people have access to it. An article posted by BBC News in 2015 shows that most of the world’s population is online. This article states that “By the end of the year 80% of households in developed countries and 34% of those in developing countries will have internet access in some form, the report continued” (BBC News, 2015). We can see that there is a big difference in the percentages of developed countries and developing countries, this is an issue that needs to be addressed.

The gap between rural areas and the cities is even bigger in developing countries. This article also mentions that the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) plays a big role in the digital society over the past 15 years but “[...] will play an even more significant role in the post-2015 development agenda and in achieving future sustainable development goals as the world moves faster and faster towards a digital society” (BBC News, 2015). We can see that there is a direct relation between ICT and the UN goals, specifically Goal 4 or the Quality Education Goal.

4.3 How Can We Raise Awareness About This Topic and Help Fund Quality Education Projects?

The first step to reach this goal is to raise awareness of the global community to be able to raise funds to provide less privileged societies with the resources they need to educate their children and have a better future. In Johansen and Guldvik found that “Berger and the Keller Fay Group (2016) found in their research that influencers are being perceived as more credible, believable and knowledgeable and that 82% are highly likely to follow an influencer’s advice” (p. 8-9). This means that the strategy used by influencer marketing is more believable by customers or simply the community as they may identify themselves with the influencers on a personal level or admire them and want to follow their example, in this case by contributing to the quality education goal. Some important activists, influencers, and celebrities use social media content to make a good impact on the world. Some many celebrities and influencers already do this. UN news posted an article in 2019 mentioning some of their advocates: Jason Momoa, US Vice President Al Gore, Aidan Gallagher, Harrison Ford, Nikolaj Coster-Waldau, Bill Gates, Dia Mirza, Rocky Dawun, and Muzoon Almellehan. Each one of them educates others using social media as well as speaking in conferences and doing volunteer work. Each of them advocates for a specific UN goal and have a large reach and interaction with their followers. They make a stronger statement for a good cause or even make a change in society quicker because they can reach millions within just a few seconds. They can use their reach and influence to educate people about goal 4 and raise awareness, which is one of the five social media lessons mentioned by Talbot (2018).

Young people are highly likely to follow influencers’ advice or actions which it can also create brand loyalty towards a good cause, in this case, Quality Education. Brand loyalty is a very important factor to keep any business running, including non-for-profits. Erdogmus and Cicek (2012) argued that marketing academia is starting to pay closer attention to this strategy in a research article titled The Impact of Social Media Marketing on Brand Loyalty. In the early 2000s, some researchers were looking at social media marketing as a new marketing strategy and the study by Erdogmus et. al (2012) shows that social media campaigns are the most important drivers of brand loyalty. (p. 1358) These methods could be a great source of fundraising for education projects in developing countries around the world.

To make the brand loyalty and social media/influencer marketing more viable, marketing professionals should get more involved in the process. Pinhero and Cristovao (2014) in their article Digital Marketing and Social Media: Why Bother? say that, “To improve digital marketing engagement, marketers must focus on relationship-based interactions with their customers.” In this case, they should start measuring and analyzing what contents being shared are more effective and with which advocate or advocates are people relating more to make donations. This way marketers can create a better outreach plan because they know what is moving people’s heart towards Goal 4.

In the journal article The Power of “Like” Lipsman, Mudd, Rick, and Bruich talk about the reach of social media posts, social media target markets, and measuring fan interaction. Lipsman et. Al (2018) state that “When a brand focuses on acquiring and engaging fans, it can benefit from a significant secondary effect-exposure among friends of fans that often surpasses reach among fans” (p. 40). By having people sharing posts about Quality Education a secondary effect-exposure could be created. This means that it would reach even more people in less time. Now, if these posts or advertisements are

shared by celebrities, advocates, and influencers that have an extensive reach worldwide the numbers can duplicate at a rapid rate.

Malala Yousafzai is a good example of being a young female activist and advocate for the Quality Education goal. She has influenced many people in the past few years by raising awareness and fighting for girl's education. According to an interview made by the United Nations, the Malala Fund raised \$3 million in 2017 to support local activist and advocates on their education mission. In the same interview, Malala stated that her goal is very clear, "and that is to continue fighting for girls' education, their empowerment, their rights." (UN Culture and Education, 2017) During the interview, she sent a very strong message reminding world leaders about their responsibilities with their people and future generations. Part of those responsibilities is to increase funding towards education for all children and provide all necessary support.

With the importance of quality education and what can be done to help the UN reach this goal established, the question of 'What can we do?' must be asked. To begin, as mentioned before, the global society needs to support equal education for everyone. As Malala says in the UN interview, once people realize that Quality Education "will help the economy to grow even faster, it will improve the standards of living of every one of us, it would improve health. It also benefits the children because when women are educated, they are more likely to take care of their children, and their education, and their future" (UN Culture and Education, 2017). By paying closer attention and contributing to quality education, the world can be made a better place.

4.4 How Distance Education Methods and Educational Software Can Provide Quality Education in Developing Countries?

Once there is support and resources towards this cause, new programs could be developed, and rural areas would have access to new technologies for educational purposes. As of today, "Rapid technological changes present opportunities and challenges, but the learning environment, the capacities of teachers and the quality of education have not kept pace" (UN Economic and Social Council, 2019). This report also states that "many developing countries still lack basic infrastructure and facilities to provide effective learning environments. Sub-Saharan Africa faces the biggest challenges: at the primary and lower secondary levels, less than half of schools have access to electricity, the Internet, computers and basic drinking water. Improving the learning environments is a very important task but using new technologies in developing countries might pose a challenge.

For those countries like Sub-Saharan African, distance learning would be a real and very good method to improve their educational systems. Simonson and Berg defined this term in an article titled Distance Learning as "Distance learning, also called distance education, e-learning, and online learning, a form of education in which the main elements include physical separation of teachers and students during instruction and the use of various technologies to facilitate student-teacher and student-student communication." This method of teaching has been mainly used in the United States for non-traditional students such as full-time workers, military, and/or people who are unable to attend classroom lectures. The article mentions that this method has become an established part of the educational system and continues to grow every single year.

Simonson et al. talk about the beginning of distance learning of the 19th century; the industry, government, and military all needed to mail-order courses. Once some language courses were offered, they gained popularity quickly. To apply this to the modern world and help developing nations achieve Quality Education, an old school distance learning method might be more appropriate for countries that have limited or no access to the internet. Some of the materials that might be very helpful for schools are phonographs, radio channels, audio recordings, and videos.

Currently, in the United States, many college libraries are trying to get rid of hard copy books, journal articles, cassettes, and even DVDs. These materials could be very beneficial for those countries with limited resources. This system could be a big improvement in countries like Sub-Saharan to assure that children attending school are meeting at least basic skills in reading and math. Michael Kozlowski wrote a blog article discussing the "purge of books." He mentioned that thousands of universities are getting rid of millions of hard copy books as their digital catalogue expands. Something very interesting about this article is that books are out away in a storage room indefinitely or recycled. University of California, Indiana University, and Syracuse University decided to get rid of thousands of books that were not being used for a very long time. Nowadays, a lot of universities are doing this to make more room to create study rooms for students.

Some people agree with this decision as we are living in a digital era, but some people disagree. One thing that could help this kind of decisions less controversial is to donate those materials for a good cause. Most of those unused books are kept digitally in a database for the use of students, faculty, and staff. The hard copies could be sent to a developing country to have the same purpose as the book were new. This would allow books to live a second life and educate others, just like they did in the past. At the same time, the universities donating their materials will know that they are going towards a good cause and could even start student campaigns to help with the cause or build a student program focused on Quality Education for developing countries. Just like the old saying, “One man’s trash is another man’s treasure,” something that is no longer valuable for universities in the United States is the greatest source of knowledge for the educational system in a developing country.

For those other countries that do have better internet access, web-based courses could be an even better option but are still not very realistic. However, providing online training for a group of teachers is more realistic. Simonson et al. stated that “Alongside the growth in modern institutional distance learning has come Web-based or facilitated personal educational services, including e-tutoring, e-mentoring, and research assistance.” These web-based assistance programs could be key to improving the educational system and assure that teachers are up to date with the right techniques to teach.

Once teachers are adequately trained, non-for-profits like the United Nations could focus on providing a good learning environment for the children. Here is when most of the donations collected with the awareness campaigns would come in place to build better classrooms and provide adequate infrastructures for teaching and learning. Also, this would give them access to technology, computer labs, and the internet.

4.5 What Methods Used in The United States Could Be Applied in Developing Countries Towards Quality Education?

To be closer to attaining the UN global education goal, the UN has to create a specific project. For example, building a computer lab at a school in a small village. Once they know their project, they need to find a way to raise funds to buy the computers, install them, and provide internet access. Here is where digital media enters the equation by creating digital fundraising sites. A lot of non-profits use online fundraising strategies to reach out for donors. Sewell (2019) talks about the challenges in digital fundraising.

She gives four main tips to combat them and has a more successful outcome. First, any issues with the website must be fixed immediately. Second, the frequency of posts or emails must be strategically planned and be just the right amount. Third, the content must be meaningful and generate some kind of connection with the targeted audience. Lastly, networking gives subscribers something of value that is related to the cause. This would be considered as an investment that would be paid off with a future donation.

After successfully reaching the organization’s donations goal, the money will be put to work to set up the computer lab, make the necessary installations, and provide internet access. Once again, digital media plays a role in the educational system. As mentioned earlier, digital media lets people be creative and innovative. By using digital media, the UN could create a platform similar to Blackboard and combine it with some social media sites like YouTube and Skype. According to Bradford, Porciello, Balkon, and Backus (2007), “Potential benefits include: (1) increased availability, (2) quick feedback, (3) improved communication, (4) tracking, and (5) skill-building” (para. 5). The creation of a new educational website could have all of these benefits and more. If by using digital media, YouTube could be incorporated into the platform, students in the small village could have access to millions of videos. If a video room like Skype is added, students could talk to people all over the world. They could also show the privileged population how they live and ask for help to grow and solve the issues in their countries.

There is a long way to go to achieve quality education in all developing countries, but one by one it can be done. The United States public education system is a good example that many countries should try to imitate. This could be something challenging because most developing countries do not have the same resources, but they could try to implement as much as possible as they start receiving financial support or educational materials. Terry Heick (2015) found ten things that the public education system in the United States is getting right. The first one is that schools are being inclusive no matter what age the student is or what difficulties they may have. Every human being should have the right to get an education and have access to it whenever they are ready, even in developing countries. Second, they focus on data by measuring their results and registering the progress of each student. For developing countries, the teacher can

keep paper records to store this data and make reports about the progress being made. Third is funding. This might be an issue for less fortunate countries but making agreements with organizations like the United Nations and having advocates to fundraise for them could help resolve this issue. Fourth, Promotion of Literacy. As mentioned before, this is big for developing countries. With more training being provided to teachers and by using distance learning methods, the level of literacy can increase rapidly. Fifth, the acknowledgement of socioeconomic influences. Developing countries should have the understanding that socioeconomic status influences academic performance. When the United States understood this, they were able to focus and educate their students better. Sixth, the cursory connection between k-12 and universities. For developing countries, this could be a great challenge but is not unattainable. There many scholarships available for brilliant students all over the world. The best students in developing countries have a great chance to obtain a scholarship to go to college in countries like the United States. However, more doors would open if they work closely with non-profits to have the right guidance.

The other things schools all over the world could learn from the United States educational system are four aspects that might not be necessarily academic. Heick's number seven is the Teacher-Student relationship. This is key to motivate students to be excited about learning new things and giving their best. Teacher-student relationships should be strong no matter the socioeconomic background, where they are from, or anything. Teachers inspire their students, and this is the main reason why students succeed. Number eight is extracurricular activities. Heick said, "these activities help build self-confidence, personal fulfilment, balance, and a strong sense of community." Once again, this is a big motivator for students to attend school and do better in the classroom. Number nine, insistence on slow change. Education is highly regulated by the state and federal government in the United States. This means that they know what the plan is and where are they going. The transition to having quality education in developing nations will take time but is a process that will be worth it in the long run. Lastly, number ten, commitment to professional development. In the United States, teachers are wanting to better themselves each day, they are committed to being better for their students. As said before, in developing countries resources are very limited, but if teachers are willing to improve and have the resources like the distance learning training proposed earlier, they could certainly make their community a better place and inspire children.

V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, digital media keeps evolving with the world and lets people bring to life ideas that they have never thought possible to exist on the internet. Digital media can be used for many purposes, from digital fundraising to digital classrooms. The UN could greatly benefit from using a good digital media strategy. This field could indeed contribute to a lot of things in its attempt to achieve the goal of quality education throughout the world by 2030. Digital media can be applied in any field to achieve any goal. One of those goals could be Quality Education. More research must be conducted showing this relationship. A good way to try this out is by having a team of professionals in the area should get more involved in some of the UN projects to analyze the results. Using celebrity/influencer/advocate marketing is a great way to raise funds and create awareness of this topic. Even developing countries with no access to the internet could receive some help through an older style of distance learning. But as these nations evolve, more funds could be used to give these communities a chance to have modern resources to educate children. This project could get started by just providing e-training to teachers and, once there are enough funds raised, these services could be available for the whole school or even the community.

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