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Impact of Technology on Healthcare and Education Sectors in our Daily Lives.

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Abstract

In the last three decades, tremendous developments have taken place in the healthcare and education sectors all over the world. It is not an exaggeration to say that these are truly breathtaking. Undoubtedly, the march of technology and the influence it weeds over our daily lives are responsible for this. For every country, health and education are vital segments in government spending. No nation, democratic or otherwise, can afford to neglect these and a welfare state must necessarily focus on these. What is more significant is that the two segments are interdependent. This paper attempts to put the spotlight on the influence of technology over the healthcare and education sectors, and describes its impact on the daily lives of people. the interplay between the two is also highlighted.

Healthcare:

Beyond any doubt, developments in medical technology have lengthened the human span

of life. Apart from x-rays, high resolution scan machines enable the doctor to arrive at precise evaluation of the patient's condition. Thus, diagnosis has vastly improved and the treatment aspect takes over. This applies to all parts of the human anatomy from head to toe. Advances in surgical techniques, whether these relate to the brain, heart, lungs, kidneys owe much to technology.

The idea of adapting a monitoring system to mundane medical care has caught the imagination of some electronics engineers and medical professionals. They foresee that will increase the speed and accuracy of medical examination and diagnosis, deepen the understanding of diseases, revolutionizes surgery and improve hospital and nursing care, wrote Lawrence Lessing in Life magazine a few decades ago. After his prediction, quickly followed the pacemaker to keep the heart beating regularly and radio pill which transmits a running account of conditions within the gastrointestinal tract to an outside receiver.

An offshoot of diabetes (millions of people suffer from this disease which is a silent killer) has led to renal maladies. The number of patients with kidney problems is on the rise and thus new instruments and techniques in dialysis have come to play a crucial role. Apart from the haemodialysis what is now called the peritoneal dialysis is becoming popular with many patients. Nephrologists are also keeping abreast of these developments.

ECG and EEG have been regular tools in the armory of doctors. Similarly, cataract surgeries are frequently being done by using laser beams. Endoscopy is also very much in the armory of specialists.

Computers play a pivotal role in every hospital even from the outpatient ward to the emergency and in patient wards. Doctors nowadays write prescriptions on computer. Similarly the bills on discharge of patients are also done by computers. Doctors and their assistants are to be computer savvy in this situation.

People everywhere have now become more health conscious than before. Thanks to a flow of information even the common man knows about hypertension, cancer, dental implant and proceeds to take the treatment. This has led to a situation in which people live longer and general medicine has now become a specialty in its own right. Knee surgery and replacement are now an accepted fact of modern life with senior citizens suffering from arthritis.

Living in the modern times is becoming highly stressful and physical exercise has been a found to relieve tension and induce a feeling of wellness it is not surprising to find a number of gym clubs sprouting up in every book and corner of metropolitan areas. These are invariably patronized by young men and women who don't mind paying hefty amounts to keep themselves in trim condition. Spending time on the treadmill and weight lifting helps in reduction of hypertension but also in shedding surplus weight. The gyms also use machines with latest technology and employ trained personnel to oversee the regimen of the awareness of their benefits in the minds of the youth and middle age people.

Swimming as a physical exercise is catching up, and games like badminton and tennis have become beneficiaries of technology. Cricket is also now under the influence of technology since umpires rely on it for crucial decisions.

Education:

The impact of technology in our daily lives is quite glaring when it comes to the education field.

There is no doubt that internet and World Wide Web have brought about a sea change in the way students try to learn. Google and Wikipedia have indeed brought a humongous amount of information within the grasp of learners.

Apart from Face book and YouTube the new entrant WhatsApp has made communication between the teachers and the taught easy.

One may go so far as to say that this revolution is unprecedented. The concept of life-long learning has also caught up and people of all ages are now enrolling for several online courses which are offered free on the internet. The acronym MOOC stands for Massive Open Online Courses and the pioneer, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) near Boston, has made many of its courseware freely available to the society. Harvard University and a few institutions in other countries also have followed suit. It is not such a rosy picture that one can perceive considering the flip side of the invasion of mobile phones and internet technology. Consider, for instance, the growing addiction of the youth to the smart phone culture. Although a lot of learning can happen by gleaning useful information from hand held sets, undesirable, even pornographic info, gets disseminated. This, obviously, has an adverse impact on impressionable minds. Again, young learners spend too much time browsing the internet neglecting outdoor activity using play grounds. But then, the latter are vanishing in schools and colleges on account of the avarice of managements in building classrooms where play grounds existed.

Herein comes the interplay between education and healthcare since the students tend to become sedentary even at a young age. Another worrying aspect is the deterioration of handwriting due to obvious reasons- students resort to pressing buttons for communication and not writing letters. The reading habit has virtually disappeared. Browsing through devices such as kindle that can store many books cannot be a

substitute for holding books in the hand and enjoying reading. All these will not come in the category of “Boon” but must be considered “Bane” of technology. Again, the offshoot ultimately is the decline in the interpersonal skills since face to face communication is a casualty. Even social visits to relative’s homes have taken a back seat in this milieu.

In the U.S., Microsoft and United States government have joined together by promoting “Mobile America” initiative to create a nation-wide contest. Programmers are invited to create mobile apps that solve social problems and enter them under different categories. Thus technology helps the youth in education for a better community by writing a code for specific social good. YouTube continues to help in offering tools for non- profit organizations which touch the lives of ordinary citizens.

Similarly, digital media has proved to be highly useful in fund raising. Online tools help in the work of large volunteer communities. This trend is catching up all over the world.

“Mobile America” by Michael Gallant (SPAN-September/October 2012)

A disturbing trend of misuse of technology is the way in which photographs are doctored – either to deceive the viewer or to enhance the aesthetics of the image. In the media field, competition for the newspaper space leads to pressure for dramatic images. Unfortunately, digital photography leaves no original negatives with which to compare an image. Here, the thorny issue remains of defining the limits of what is and is not

acceptable. So far, there is no fast and effective software to detect altered images in the meanwhile, viewers will have to accept that “Seeing is not believing”.

Indeed, all this is owing to the photo-editing computer programme Adobe Photoshop which enables manipulation of photographs. Undoubtedly, this is a “serious threat to photo journalism’s credibility”. This is another instance of technology touching our daily lives.

“Distorted Picture” By Sherry Ricchiardi in American journalism review (Aug-Sep. 2007)

A host of other related issues also deserve attention. Social networking sites are increasingly “Blurring the line between the personal and professional”. As a result, news organizations are faced with “ethics and etiquette questions”. The people who consume the news (readers of newspapers, viewers of TV channels) are thus influenced by the new technology in their daily lives.

The publishing field is undergoing a transformation day by day. Newspapers, popular magazines, scholarly journals, e-books to print-on-demand vending machines are all influenced by technology. In fact, publishers are willy-nilly forced to blend their “print business with new digital brands adding a new level of engagement.”

An emerging trend, especially in the West, is this: teaching students by making them design and play video games. It is, of course open to criticism and skeptics ask whether keeping children “plugged into such games is the best approach to learning.” In the area

of fine arts, music lessons through Skype are already popular with avid learners in Asian countries and the West. Students in the USA for example, learn music from gurus or teachers in India.

Technology has spawned machines of all types which touch our daily lives. “We do not know how to manage our machines. Machines were made to be man’s servants; yet he has grown so dependent on them that they are in a fair way to become his masters...Already we find it difficult to work or play without the machines, and a time may come when they will rule us altogether, just as we rule the animals,” wrote the famous thinker C. E. M. Joad, years ago, foreseeing the portents.

Yet another puzzling situation is confronting people in recent years. It is the chasm between the older generation of senior citizens and the new which includes middle-aged and the youth when it comes to handling smart phones, laptops etc. A sense of frustration creeps in the minds of the elderly as a result. No doubt, they derive a sort of vicarious satisfaction and even pride while watching the deft ways in which the next gen navigates through different online pathways using these gadgets.

How technology is being twined to nefarious and criminal purposes is best illustrated by the devious ways in which terror outfits operate. Now that global travel has become a fact of life, millions of people (for business, medical, tourism etc. purposes) criss-cross the oceans every day. Their lives are at great risk from the acts of terrorists. Thus, a few radical elements manage to hold governments and people to ransom by the

misuse of technology to serve their inhuman actions.

Finally, the impact of technology in daily lives is the most poignantly seen in the global warming process. Aero planes and auto-mobiles not only consume fuel but also lead to the depletion of oxygen in the atmosphere. Ecological imbalance has already led to severe pollution problems and environmental degradation. The hope of humanity is that technology will ultimately find a solution to the myriad problems facing people everywhere.