Committee: Special Concentration
Issue: Is "E-learning" the solution for an equal access to education in developing countries between men and women?
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Introduction

In 2010, Bill Gates, founder of Microsoft and Windows said *"Five years from now on the Web for free you'll be able to find the best lectures in the world. It will be better than any single university."*

As it stands today, the computer has become the greatest tool ever invented by mankind, and the internet (which requires a computer) is the greatest source of knowledge ever gathered. Since the 90s', many people all over the world have tried developing programs to teach children and adults using computers. The most famous one is probably "the hole in the wall" idea invented in 1999 by Saguta Mitra in India, which consisted in auto-learning using computers for children all across India, and now throughout the entire world, especially in poor and deprived areas, where boys and girls taught themselves equally. Now with computers accessible everywhere and the dramatic spread of Internet connections throughout the world, learning from a computer can easily be put in place by anybody, but some areas, especially in developing and underdeveloped countries do not have access to such technology. Furthermore, the Internet being a relatively free place, malicious people and/or extremist groups can publish their ideologies and propaganda, to try to rally as many people to their causes.

So to what extent can the e-learning method be applied for these developing countries like India to insure equal education between genders?

Keywords:
E-Learning: The use of electronic media and information and communication technology in education.

In the 1960s', professors in California had the idea to use computers to teach elementary school children mathematics and reading. The method was mostly used as an experiment in privileged areas of the United States. In the following decades, programs and virtual courses were created to teach with a computer, still in the USA. With the Internet and the mass spread of computers all over the world, the

1990s' were a boom in the history of e-learning, with the first online high school created in 1994. Computers were installed in every school for students to use them, as well in developing countries (like "The Hole in the Wall" experiment). Nowadays, almost everything can be taught and learned of the internet and programs are used in schools worldwide.

E-learning is seen by many people as the future of education as it can bring good and adequate courses to children and adults in remote areas where professors are absent or ineffective, you would simply need a computer or mobile phone to learn almost everything. According to them, it can give most people a good or even high level of education to everybody worldwide, regardless of social class or sex; for example, it could help educate girls in countries where it is dangerous for them to go to school. Furthermore, it will also teach people how to use computers and adapt to new technologies. Unfortunately, these methods come at a high cost, and can only be realized if the community, school or individual have a computer and better an Internet connection. Indeed, it is estimated that in order to achieve such measures (installing e-learning methods for all children in developing countries), the cost would be over 200 billion dollars.

There are also doubts to the quality of the given education, precisely regarding the Internet where anybody can publish what he wants, and our aim is to tackle such information when it is too extreme, racist or too political. Furthermore, if given the proper tools to teach, dictatorial regime could easily spread their politics and increase their control over education.

E-learning is very common in the United States, the country where it originated from, and is encouraged by most universities as most courses are online and free for students. Indeed, almost every American school has computers were students can work from and even have dedicated classes now for computer use.

E-learning is also very popular in European countries like the UK or France, where students use programs in class to help them understand better their courses. The same applies to Japan.

In China, e-learning is spreading rapidly as the government sees it as the solution for higher education in China, a country which lacks university graduates.

Many NGOs also support e-learning, such as but not limited to the UNEP, the Global environmental organization, the International humanitarian agency and the Public health and development organization, and recently some of them have decided to bring the e-learning "technology" using programs to various African countries

The UN in 2008 has launched an e-learning initiative in over 160 developing countries to promote it, with 16 of its agencies: UNDP, UNU, UNITAR, UNSSC, UN Secretariat at New York, FAO, WFP, UNDPKO, UNWTO, UNHCR, ITC-ILO, IAEA, The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis & Malaria, WHO, and UNEP, UNEP CITES. UN Environment Programme Executive Director, Achim Steiner, supported this initiative with the following words: "Technology supported learning offers tremendous potential to address the capacity development needs of a wide range of beneficiaries in developing countries."

To truly exploit this technology, delegates must work together to find a solution. Their task is to find a balance between providing virtual education to men and women in developing countries ensuring that

this education is equally distributed, while keeping the quality of this education high and objective to all, reminding themselves of the individual situation of each country . Will they collaborate with authoritarian governments to give a biased education to its peoples or will they have to let aside some countries and deprive its populations?

Good links to check:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/E-learning

http://www.openideo.com/open/how-might-we-increase-the-availability-of-affordable-learning-tools-educational-for-children-in-the-developing-world/inspiration/stick-the-internet-into-walls-everywhere

http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=553&ArticleID=6013

http://www.fffod.org/mediatheque/videos-en-ligne/2042