

# Children and technology



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Ashraf Islam Okanagan College English 100-003 6 February 2013 Children and Technology Since the early Twenty First Century, there has been vast advancement in technology, particularly in the field of computers that are developing faster than even the blinking of our eyes. Simultaneously, technology has become a vital part of our daily lives. Most of our activities are the part and product of technology; starting from the way we receive our news through various websites and digital newspapers, paying bills online, sending and receiving email, and finding research information all on the Internet.

More than 500 million people communicate and keep in touch with friends through online social networking (Hatch). As adults became increasingly more dependent and absorbed by technology, it is likely that the children of today have become enthusiastic users as well. Laptops and smart phones are being developed for children as young as five to ten years old. Since the minds of the children are complex and insensitive, there is indeed anxiety among many adults about how these technologies can bring about changes in children's social life.

As Hutchby and Ellis said “ both ‘ childhood’ and ‘ technology’ to be accorded an unproblematic status, each treated as having a stable and self-evident existence as there is a straightforward impact of one upon another”(1). Specifically, children's engagement with internet social sites and violent games has generated considerable concern and additionally mass media observations and discussion. There is an obvious argument that children's exposure to these technologies will help them to cope with future challenges that they will no doubt encounter in their careers.

While on the other hand, it is argued that children who are using technology are becoming more indolent, unappreciative and more prone to health related problem. Nonetheless, access to certain technology under proper guidance is a critical component for today's children not only to gain a better grasp of modern education thereby preparing them for the future challenge but also to improve their social development and health. In the absence of proper technological knowledge, Children will not learn the skills that will essentially help them to compete in today's world that is progressively more relying on new technological inventions.

There have been several studies on the positive impact that technology has on children in the field of education. It has been observed that introducing SMART board technology in the classroom can act as catalyst to increase students' motivation and to enhance communication between teachers and students. According to the result of a 40-year retrospective study done by Concordia University in Canada, introducing technology in the class does have a positive impact on younger minds.

Newer and more sophisticated applications of technology produce even greater positive impact; iPads, for instance, enable portable creativity and make education fun, which is always a good sign (Techvibe). Professor Richard Schmid, chairman of the education department at Concordia said "Where technology does have a positive impact is when it actively engages students, when it's used as a communication tool, when it's used for things like simulations or games that enable students to actively manipulate the environment"(Techvibes).

According to Dr. Joseph J. Kerski, who is an Education Industry Curriculum Development Manager on the Education Team in Denver, Colorado, USA (Esri), implementation of the Geographic Information System (GIS) software in over 1, 000 high schools across the nation has significantly increased students' motivation, communication and learning, especially on the part of visual and non-traditional learners. Technology prepares students at a young age for the workforce. This skill is becoming more and more of a vital in our technically advanced society.

According to the US Department of Commerce, sixty percent of jobs today require technological skills, and this is expected to increase to ninety percent in the next fifty years (Hatch). Today's parents are more concerned about the emerging social networking sites that are occupying the minds of most of the children of this generation. Children getting expose to uncensored materials and sensitive issues on the internet and cases like online bullying and harassment which can cause devastated situation like committing suicide are likely to create such fear around them.

However, new research in this regard has discovered that technology can actually act as a new medium for children to increase and maintain a good social connection among their relatives and friends. It can provide a virtual platform to shape their identity by demonstrating their knowledge and creativity. Sites like Facebook, Tweeter, MySpace, YouTube and Skype have become children's new virtual park where they can make new friends, play games with each other and create new pages or videos to share their ideas and perception.

In general, these social sites have become a way for people of all ages to connect and keep in touch with people they already know, instead of forming bonds with new people. This medium is also helping them to involuntarily improving their technological abilities by exposing them to various skills like communication, typing speed, hand and eye coordination, basic software knowledge and gathering information for research. Over use of these mediums can always be monitored and controlled by parents if they are concern about their children.

Larry D. Rosen, PhD, Professor of Psychology at California State University, Dominguez Hills, who did a research on the impact of social networking sites on children, said “ Parents are encouraged to assess their child’s activities on social networking sites, and discuss removing inappropriate content or connections to people who appear problematic. Parents also need to pay attention to the online trends and the latest technologies; websites and applications children are using (APA).

It’s undeniable that these social media have changed the landscape of the socializing process especially among the young people and uses of these are likely to increase more in coming years. “ Exergaming” technologies like Kinect and Nintendo Wii that require players to perform physical activities in order to play a game have become popular in recent years not only among the children but also adults. Unlike traditional video games, which are more sedentary based, this new gaming technology requires lot of physical movement to win.

Well known of these games are Wii Sports, in which children and adults can play virtual games, such as tennis and baseball, and Just Dance! for the

Kinnect. A game highly geared toward exercise is Wii Fit Plus, which includes activities for yoga, aerobics, and balance improvement; it also allows users to chart their progress and see how well they are improving (Hatch). It also helps parents to spend some time with their children which are also an essential part of their social development.

Even though exergames should not replace real life exercising, this new gaming technology is proven to be a new way to motivate children to do exercise more frequently producing a positive effects on health and fitness (FITDAY). With growing concern about children suffering from obesities, it is noteworthy that exergaming can significantly help by burning off some calories resulting in weight loss thereby improving body coordination and movements.

Technology has become an integral part of our lives and society and it is likely to be there with us for the rest our lives. It will be ever evolving and advanced and keeping up and staying will be the challenge. Since everything in this world is some way or the other connected to technologies, considering technology a hindrance for today's children is impractical notion. Indeed, technologies can have negative impacts but good parenting and proper guidance by teachers can help the children to gain the benefits out of the technologies around them.

Since the children of this generation will be valuable resource for the future, proper use of technologies and getting the maximum benefits out these to prepare them for the future should be an important priority for all of us.

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