

The Medium as the Message: YouTube as an Educational Resource

Name

University

YOUTUBE AS EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE

Abstract

Education is and has always been a complex process in which a teacher and a student take the efforts necessary to encourage learning. This frequently occurs by virtue of the teacher's commitment, which in turn excites the students and generates motivation.

However, and while such processes are of essential value, the reality remains that teachers require materials containing information on various areas of study, which have traditionally existed in the forms of textbooks and other printed material. Augmenting this in the twentieth century was the introduction of audio and film learning aides, but this in turn has largely been eclipsed by the inestimable impact of the Internet. This technology has literally revised the ways in which the world functions and, as it enables access to untold amounts of information, there exists the potential for the Internet to enhance education. One website in particular, YouTube, enjoys an unprecedented degree of popularity, offering videos on an infinite number of subjects and archival footage, and is consequently and increasingly being turned to by teachers as a classroom resource.

Both dilemmas and opportunities are in place here, and the aim of this research is to explore the multiple aspects of the teacher's resources of the past and today. In the final analysis, it is seen that, while YouTube is in fact a highly valuable resource for education, this is true only when the teacher is consistently careful to assess and present the relevant content, discern the quality of the content as credible, and apply the standards of integrity and validity not demanded by the website itself.



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Throughout the history of education, there has always been a consistent and pragmatic reality; namely, teaching and learning are inevitably reliant upon what materials are employed. It is of course true that the skill and commitment of the teacher are crucial components, and that students at any level are more motivated to learn when the instructor is both capable and encouraging. Education is in fact an exponential process, and there can be no minimizing of the impact of the teacher's role. Nonetheless, educators must be equipped with resources facilitating learning, just as students rely on the same resources to acquire information. Traditionally, this has taken the predominant form of a textbook, with some variations in resources additionally employed. Audio recordings, films, and trips outside of educational institutions, for example, have all been used to augment the process of learning. Variations in media allow for opportunities to promote learning because, from the textbook to the online video, the process of acquiring information differs and various advantages present themselves.

This then goes to the unprecedented impact of the Internet. In a matter of several decades, this technology has reshaped virtually every aspect of how individuals and societies function and interact. The many and inestimable impacts of the Internet have been, and will continue to be, analyzed from multiple perspectives, depending on what is relevant at the moment. Within this process is that of discovery; extremely familiar to many on a universal level, the relative novelty of the technology still reflects opportunities yet to be fully explored. Regarding education, however, there is a compelling and important matter at hand, and one apart from the general assessment of



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the Internet as a medium to get information. The phenomenon of YouTube in particular demands exploration in this regard, and chiefly because so many turn to it as a source of entertainment, learning, social interaction, and a means of gaining insights into one's own and other diverse cultures. For the teacher, this represents an extraordinary opportunity.

At the same time, many YouTube users nowadays are more wary of the negative potential of this universal and universally accessible platform. Just as there is no question that the archival nature of YouTube provides countless sources of information, it is also true that the website, available to all, offers a highly subjective representation of reality, including misinformation, opinion stated as fact, and/or blatant inaccuracies. The following then reviews traditional educational resources and their evolution, the rise of the Internet as a vital force in human existence, and the nature and impact of YouTube on society while also focusing on its various advantages and disadvantages for the teacher. What is ultimately revealed is that YouTube is a greatly valuable resource for education, but only when the teacher is careful to assess the relevant content, apply the standards of integrity and quality not demanded by the website itself, and consider the wide range of ways YouTube may benefit learners.

