CYBERCULTURE: REVISITING LIFE CHANGES IN CYBERSPACE

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ABSTRACT

People change the way environment demonstrates for possible adaption of new behaviour in a community. Cyberculture is a product of technological innovations in the process of developing new experiences of delivering information and sustaining communication. This article discusses how cyberculture shares the common interest of people within its community with the objective of helping to educate oneself and be proactive in seeking for social change. Cyberactivism is one way of pushing the community to react on the questionable decisions and actions of either private establishment or government institutions. Participating in youth oriented online activities that seek to develop unity in fighting against corruption is also being emphasized on this article. Moving towards the achievement of holistic education with e-learning demonstrates the active involvement of education sector in changing the traditional way of providing quality education to the youth of information age.

Keyword: Cyberactivitism, Cyberculture, Cyberpresence, Cyberspace, Social Network

INTRODUCTION

Cyberculture is an extension of common life ethos and practices where people can exist to exercise their freedom and apply their philosophies within the premises of real world environment that connects virtuality and bridges the gap between time and space. It is an environment created by digital technologies where people develop and establish new forms of social relations, in a kind of virtual projection of reality (Machado, et al, 2007).

It helps strengthen the relationship among the people around the community to enhance their affective appreciation of every one's involvement as cyberpresence comes within the context of virtual participation. Real and virtual spaces are not completely separate spheres but rather closely intertwined, wherein virtual spaces provide an opportunity to parallel and extend the type of interaction present in real world free spaces (Simi & Futrell, 2006). The Internet is a multifaceted medium that challenges traditional theories and concepts of interpersonal and mass communication (Bubas, 2001). Each online scene or space, whether declared to be a community or not, is organised both by its specific form and by an order of appropriate identity practices associated with that form. At the same time, across these different cultures, modes of belonging mediate these practices which are recognisable across many online communities and formats (Driscoll & Gregg, 2010).

In order to explicate how theorists think about cyberspace, Badaracco (2001) wrote in one of her reviews about theories of cyberculture, she cited that Bell examines different approaches to science and technology studies, social construction of technology and actor-network theory approaches, in order to find ways to think about relations between humans and machines. The Internet's influence generates a range of reactions from different people, ranging from idealism to cynicism, but however it is received, there's no denying that it has led to dramatic shifts in such areas as interpersonal interaction, work culture, relations to time, expectations of speed and convenience, networking between individuals and groups, and even use of language (Gale Encyclopedia of E-Commerce, 2002).

Cyberspace is an imaginary and multidimensional space in which people can absorb sensory experiences, enjoy intellectual creations, and interact cognitively and emotionally. It is also an economic survival kit for the information society (Prieto, 2004). Cyberspace came into existence

through computer technology and cyberculture may best be conceived as a culture which is mediated in some significant way by computer technology (Goi, 2009). The people who are considered as end-users are called Netizens play an important role in defining its characteristics as beneficial and detrimental in some aspects.

Cyberpresence of Activism

The expansion of freedom of expression and the decline of censorship has often been associated with the movement towards democracy (Gomez & Gan, 2004). Cyberactivism is seen as an important gateway to progressive social change (Akin, 2011). The movement's cyberpresence intersects with and enhances their real world activities by offering multiple opportunities for access and coordination. Virtual contact with the community offers members social support, companionship, and a sense of belonging to a community. Most of the commentators are critical of the idea that robust collective sensibilities can be built through the virtual realm. Cyberspace is just one context that, in conjunction with an array of face-to-face contexts, can be very influential in movement members' efforts to construct and sustain movement culture and collective action (Simi & Futrell, 2006).

Some observers argue that cyberspace is a new place of assembly where real world social communities can be established, sustained, or renewed as virtual communities and skeptics, however argue that cyberspace creates mere simulacra of community (Simi & Futrell, 2006). Very weak social ties are sustained in the absence of face-to-face interaction (Simi & Futrell, 2006) and the level of social presence in computer mediated communication is considerably lower ((Bubas, 2001). Cyberspace is being used to connect all sorts of people, yet the character of those connections is unclear (Simi & Futrell, 2006). Since it is just only an extension of the real world activities, its impact of the message to the receiver is not the same level of face-to-face interaction due to the absence of some important cues in communication. It is being used for information dissemination and certain behaviour can be influenced and triggered by this message from any communication media but the final decision for certain action is still left undone. Cyberactivism happens online and that it is a process; offline actions counts as cyberactivism if they are a result of online motivation (Chamberlain, 2004).

The objective of cyberactivitism is to inform not only the members of their social community to act directly towards the problem but also to get some sympathy and support from the general public to open their minds and be enlightened to the real situation of a certain society or territory. Making things happen in the cyberspace is the fastest way to communicate important messages to a larger group of subcultures.

Role of Cyberculture against Corruption

Information Technology rather has acted to create a universe characterized by virtuality, constant change, indeterminacy, and an information orientated perspective on the world (Nel & Kroeze 2008). Computer mediated communication technology could be used to empower the people to provide substantial information to report safely the incidents of irregularities in the community to help change the culture of dishonesty. Individuals could communicate with each other across geographical and political boundaries without restriction and once a text is posted on the Internet the ability to control its movement is minimal, the notion of censorship that was so strongly present in traditional media was viewed to have an uncertain future on the Internet (Gomez & Gan, 2004).

There is a community of registered online youth volunteer patrollers in the Philippines established in 2007 by one the biggest TV networks in the country, the ABS-CBN as its citizen journalism arm - the BMPM "Bayan Mo iPatrol Mo" (Your Town, You Patrol) which aims to report through the use of any technology and communication media such acts of corruption or illegal activities of Election candidates before, during and after the election period. BMPM, which has almost half a million Bayan Patrollers, reflects the growing influence of citizen journalism as a year-round vehicle for change and citizens' strengthened capacity to expand the use of social media — from mere reportage to organizing platforms for causes and advocacies (The Philippine Star, 2013).

Expanding the utilization and benefits of computer mediated technology would probably answer some dubious acts or doubtful processes within the government system being implemented by corrupt individuals with vested interest in the wealth of the country that resulted to a wasted

economy and betrayals of public trust. Minimization of untoward behaviours of any local and national government officials is the main advocacy of this program while total eradication of corruption and any anomalies in the administration is the ultimate dream and hope of the youth for them to really enjoy the benefits of having a peaceful community and to experience truly the wealth and progress of the nation. Through the aid of advanced technology and cycultures who fight against corruption, the partial achievement of this aspiration is already at the threshold.

Youth Oriented Culture of Social Network

The way of life that youth has experiencing today is already different few decades back in time. Long distance communication before was truly difficult to sustain but at present, with the use of various applications of technology in helping people achieve its glorious impact to provide easiness of exchanging feeling, emotions and ideas, it just only a matter of one click to connect with millions of people around the metro. Social systems that cultivate generalizable competencies, instil a robust sense of efficacy, create opportunity structures, provide aidful resources, and allow room for self-directedness increase the chances that people will realize what they wish to become (Bandura, 1999).

Cybersociality is the new expressions of "being together", sharing emotions, and communicating in the networked social environments. It refers to the way that humans have to empathise and enter in touch with their community, and it takes into account the synergy between real interaction and virtual communication (Casalegno, 2001). The Internet enables varied configurations of communication exchange like e-mail, file transfer, newsgroups and mailing lists, bulletin boards, chat systems, text or audio and video conferences, group calendars, workflow systems, collaborative writing systems, decision support systems and other elaborate systems for the support of work groups and teams (Bubas, 2001).

Utilizing social networking media has made various impacts and usefulness to personal, social and educational perspectives. MySpace and Facebook emphasize categories and aspects of popular culture that teenagers find important (Maranto & Barton, 2010). People use social networking sites not only to exchange news and opinions, but also they become tools used to organize various social events (Wrzeszcz, 2012). Information technologies influence every

sphere of human activity including education (Šol, et al 2012). Social media use for learning while maintaining the same focus on communication; cooperation, reading shared articles, information search and being used for sharing one's ideas, opinion, experience (Vaičiūnienė, 2012). Computer mediated communication in a work environment like in institutions of higher learning should be utilized in a way that enhances the potential advantages of a computer network as a medium (Bubas, 2001) to share educational and instructional materials. Exchanging of copies of lectures and notes is now cheaper and more convenient through soft copies than having it photocopied. Learning is easier to achieve within the academic community.

Bandura's social cognitive theory stands in clear contrast to theories of human functioning that overemphasize the role that environmental factors play in the development of human behavior and learning (Pajares, 2002). Therefore, the introduction of e-learning facilities also modified the way students' access to information and acquires cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills from interactive instructional materials and enhanced assessment and effective evaluation methods. E-learning is a concept derived from the use of information and communication technologies to deliver teaching and learning and many of its projects were realized and integrated into education process in different forms (Šol, et al 2012) because it enhances the interest of the students to learn new discoveries and their potential to excel using this platform. The community of learners participate in intellectual activities over the network and enhances their writing communication skills and critical thinking to provide responses in the forum.

Conclusion and Recommendation

From the review conducted by Nel and Kroeze (2008), they proposed that the influences of Information Technology have acted and continued to act to promote Post-Modernism which influences include its displacement of space and time, its promotion of the Information Society, its ability to create digital hyper realities, its destructive influence on tradition and culture, and most of all its catastrophic/ revolutionary impact on the identity. Internet could be useful for helping social movements even though the state and other authorities circumscribe it (Akin, 2011). As cyberspace becomes a prominent tool used by movement organizers and activists,

movement scholars are weighing in on the same questions to understand contemporary social movement cultures (Simi & Futrell, 2006).

If cyberculture and cyborg post-modernism are partly a response to virtual reality technology and related advances in information and communications systems, they also articulate changing attitudes to new technologies in seeking to redefine their role (Schroeder, 1994). The information that is related to cultural and ethnic background, social status, gender and age is often reduced, suppressed or simply not present in CMC (Bubas, 2001) but communicative space or platform created by the Internet is not a culturally neutral or value-free space in which culturally diverse individuals communicate with equal ease (Reeder et al., 2004).

Youth of information age have diverse intensions and objectives of engaging in different cybercultures. Some of them sought and organized movements; participate in social advocacies for change and most of them are just utilizing the benefits of cyberspace for personal and educational purposes. Technology is calling them to respond in various life-changing activities that would benefit not only for personal experience or development but also for the sake of changing the future direction of their respective geographical communities. Cyberculture creates another dimension on how to unite people from different nations and races with common interest of strengthening real world activities through computer mediated communication.

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