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**Techno- Pedagogy and Knowledge Management:**  
*The Transitional Gateway of*  
Digital Instructional Space



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## Global Mental Health Crisis: Management of Education in the Digital Revolution

Tohid Moradi Sheykhjan

A growing body of evidence from across the globe is also telling us that no matter where they are from more and more people are relying on digital tools, platforms and services to learn, engage, participate, play, innovate, work or socialize. In the current period of rapid development of information society information literacy of citizens belonging to different social and age groups is becoming increasingly important. Information technology expands the possibilities for communication and access to relevant information; provide the conditions for the implementation of social functions, self-realization and creativity. However, the possibility of mastering the skills of working with information is not equal for the comprehensive of citizens in the global society. Institutions and organizations engaged in this process can provide the overcoming of this inequality.

Here specifies the step towards shaping an integrative conceptual frame of reference that encompasses most of the positive mental health dimensions of user activity in the digital revolution, which may serve as a basis for future research on the promotion of mental health literacy.

### DIGITAL REVOLUTION

The power of technology to jump across borders and time zones, to join the once disparate, and to foster social connectedness, has provided the means for the people of today to participate in the global society in ways previously not possible. The rapid growth of information and communication technologies and innovation in digital systems represent a revolution that has fundamentally changed the way people think, behave, communicate, work and earn their livelihood. This so-called digital revolution has forged new ways to create knowledge, educate people and disseminate information. Despite its immense potential to improve employees' lives for the better, increased use of technology is also at risk of damaging our mental health and giving rise to techno stress.

Sadly, there are also new or evolving risks – exposure to violence; access to inappropriate content, goods and services; concerns about excessive use; and issues of data protection and privacy.

### GLOBAL MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

Media-manufactured images and narratives have begun to seep into our realities without our knowing of it.

The World Bank and the World Health Organization have predicted that by the year 2020 the health burden worldwide attributed to neuropsychiatric disorders could increase by about 50%, from 10.5% of the total burden to almost 15% in the year 2020 (Maller, 2009). Mental illnesses are also becoming more widespread reaching people at younger ages. This is could be related to a number of social, ecological and technological processes, including: the polarities of high levels of urbanization, crowding and social isolation; globalization of economies, communication and information; human, social, and economic epidemics related to depression, substance abuse and violence the break-up of families; and perhaps an almost complete disconnection from the natural world (Maller, 2009). Researchers found an association between problematic Internet use and a number of mental health issues, including depression, anxiety, social isolation, shyness, low self –esteem , and lack of social and emotional skills (Young, 2004; Flatt, 2013) Research indicates that excessive media use, particularly harmful when combined with heavy work demands or life stressors, can create psychological dysfunctions that include disordered attention, cognition overload, and addiction, perpetuate symptoms of anxiety and depression, loneliness, decrease emotional intelligence and decrease attention span, shyness, low self –esteem, and lack of social and emotional skills (Walsh, 2011; Guy, 2012).

When technology is overused it creates dependency and longstanding damage to attention, memory, emotional intelligence, and social connection in general (Berman, Jonides, & Kaplan, 2008; Weiss, Baer, Allan, Saran, & Schibuk, 2011; Hamisi et al., 2013). Technological and social media advances continue to grow without much understanding of the general impact on our well-being. Improving the mental health in the global society is one of the major social policy challenges of our era. The crisis around our mental health in the digital revolution is clear. The anxieties of adults, driven by a lack of knowledge and skill, can be compounded by media stories which may link anti-social and criminal behaviours with technology use amongst children and young people. Sometimes this can lead to narrow emphasis on the potential harm of specific aspects of children’s technological use without a clear idea of the wider risk factors affecting children’s safety and wellbeing.

***Do we have a coherent plan in the education system to deal with the current demands upon the global mental health?***

Over the coming decades, mental health services are facing a number of major strategic challenges. Our population is growing and will become increasingly diverse. Attitudes and expectations are changing. Fundamental questions are beginning to be asked about where future investment might come from, which must be addressed. Concerns about the role of mass media on society always take place within a social context. Currently, concerns about exposure to media causing harm are often expressed within broader anxieties about deterioration in the mental health and behaviour of children.

***What is happening to children?***

Palmer (2006) defines ‘Toxic Childhood Syndrome’ as being the result of a combination of “modern world” factors that are “damaging our children” and discusses how we can ‘detoxify’ our children. Among these potentially ‘toxic’ factors are those associated with the rapid growth of mass media. These are complex cases involving very vulnerable individuals and unique circumstances and it is important to consider that the anxiety and devastation caused by such tragic and senseless acts can lead to an innate need for simple and clear explanations of cause. Simple explanations can lead to emotive calls for simple solutions which may not necessarily ‘solve’ the problems (given a lack of evidence) but may leave those most anxious and distraught feeling that ‘something is being done’. Combining anxieties about the potential dangers of modern technology with worries about the moral welfare of the young provides a very potent basis for public anxiety. On the other side of this debate are those who argue that the media and new technologies are being used as a scapegoat for complex and multi-faceted social problems. The focus of this discussion around such tragic instances and individual histories has led to a highly polarised debate within society and to some degree I have found this dynamic reflected within the research community. We need to navigate a path between different findings and base our thinking on assessments of possible risk as well as proven harms from the evidence.

**MANAGEMENT OF EDUCATION IN THE GLOBAL CRISIS**

In light of the rapid and continual development of digital technology, individuals are required to use a growing variety of technical, cognitive, and sociological skills in order to perform tasks and solve problems in digital environments. These skills are referred to in the literature as “digital literacy” (Gilster, 1997; Inoue, Naito, & Koshizuka, 1997; Lenham, 1995; Pool, 1997). Digital literacy can be defined as survival skill in the digital era. It constitutes a system of skills and strategies used by learners and users in digital environments. By employing

different types of digital literacy, users improve their performance and “survive” a variety of obstacles and stumbling blocks that lie in the way within this special medium. If digital media are becoming increasingly integrated into the everyday lives of the global society, then digital literacy is essential to citizens’ ability to both imagine and enact their rights in the digital age. Digital literacy comprises the technical and higher order evaluative skills required to access, understand, and participate in or create content using digital media.

In order for digital literacy to support the global citizens’ meaningful participation, it must encompass three kinds of literacy:

**Technical literacy:** being able to successfully navigate technologies with technical skills

**Media literacy:** understanding the opportunities new technologies can open up; working knowledge of available platforms; capacity to make judgments about the quality and reliability of online sources.

**Social literacy:** an understanding of the social norms that apply in online settings.

### ***Is the Crisis in global Society Changing Faster than People Can Manage?***

In reality we don’t have time to think about the crisis which we are facing in our global society.

Mental health may be defined as; “a state of emotional and social well-being in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can manage the normal stresses of life, can work effectively, and is able to play a role in his or her community” (WHO, 1999)

- Mental health is more than the absence of mental illness
- Focus on positive mental health and wellbeing across populations
- Building psychological strengths, competencies and resources
- Prevention of mental disorders
- Concern with specific disorders - reducing incidence, prevalence or seriousness of a targeted problem
- Mortality, morbidity and risk behaviours

Concept of positive mental health (Keyes, 2002; Huppert, 2005; Ryff et al., 2006)

- Sense of subjective well-being and life satisfaction
- Positive functioning, engagement, fulfillment and social well-being
- Focus on enhancing the strengths and competencies of individuals, communities and society.

***Addressing the Determinants of Mental Health Promotion***

- Using technologies to support the development of life skills and social competencies
- Sense of self, control, efficacy and esteem
- Relationship skills
- Coping skills
- Communication
- Emotional literacy
- Problem solving skills
- Sense of connectedness – home, school, workplace community, services
- Online interventions.
- To harness the potential of online technologies for mental health promotion:
  - address mental health literacy
  - address the issue of digital literacy
  - Enhancing mental health literacy through effective communication
- Broader than knowledge and beliefs about mental disorders
- Resource for empowering active and informed participation in mental health promotion, prevention and treatment.

***Health Literacy is recognised as:***

- Key determinant of health - contributor to health inequalities
- Influences health behaviour and health service use
- Impacts on health outcomes and health costs (IOM, 2004; US DHHS, 2010)
- “Health literacy is linked to literacy and entails people’s knowledge, motivation and competences to access, understand, appraise and apply health information in order to make judgments and take decisions in everyday life concerning health care, disease prevention and health promotion to maintain or improve quality of life during the life course” (European Health Literacy Consortium, 2012)
- Using technologies to optimise population mental health literacy
- Mental health literacy is the outcome of individual and social processes – culture and society, health and education systems.
- Mental health literacy-friendly organizations schools, workplace, community, welfare, health care settings.

- Building greater public understanding of the importance of positive mental health as a resource for everyday life
- Online communication strategies tailored for different audiences, using appropriate language and media
- Young people – new social media; communities; workplace interventions
  - Reorienting health services – other health professionals
- Treatment services – recovery, healing and trauma
- Primary care – integrated mental and physical health
  - Advocacy - multisectoral collaboration and partnerships
- Partners in other sectors – education and training, employment, housing, planning, welfare
- Mental health literate organizations.

***Using technologies for mental health Promotion***

- Mental health is created in the settings where people live their lives
- Using technologies to enhance access to resources and opportunities
- Supportive relationships, life skills, education, employment, services, opportunities for social inclusion: Internet, new media, social network sites.
- Virtual environment for establishing and maintaining relationships – family, schools, workplace, community, services
- Delivery of online interventions
  - Build greater understanding of mental health and its importance for health and wellbeing
  - Empower and mobilise communities and individuals to shape and initiate their own actions to promote mental health and wellbeing
  - Engage with a broader concept of mental health literacy
- Mental health literate individuals, communities, organizations
  - Advocate for policies that will create the conditions that promote and protect population mental health
- reorient policies, sectors and services to action on mental health promotion and prevention

**CONCLUSION**

*Instead of allowing potentially harmful using practices to evolve, users must start playing a proactive role to overcome the dark side of technology. Digital Revolution has the capacity to improve living standards for millions of people all around the globe. A digitally connected*



society brings with it challenges, certainly, but ones which people can be empowered to negotiate with aplomb. Any discussion focused on better understanding how the ubiquity of digital tools impacts on people's rights, must be informed by children and young people themselves. Moreover, better communication between people helps resolve conflicts and attain world peace.

As it becomes increasingly difficult to draw the line between offline and online, it is necessary for us to examine how this changing environment impacts the wellbeing and development the human bearings' mental health and their rights all around the global society. Ensuring that all human beings are safe requires approaches that promote digital literacy, resilience and cyber savvy. It is only in partnership that we can reach consensus on how to create a safe, open, accessible, affordable and secure digital world by **mental health education**. Critically, children and young people's profound insight must help inform, shape and drive this goal – which needs to focus on equity of access, safety for all, digital literacy across generations, identity and privacy, participation and civic engagement.

We need a credible strategy in the current education system for how we will tackle increasing demand for generations' mental health services .We need to take the necessary steps to ensure that people all around the globe can reap the opportunities of digital access, advancing their rights, while also ensuring their safety by **management of mental health education**.

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