

SMARTPHONES ARE CHANGING THE WAY WE LIVE. HIGHLIGHT THE IMPACT ON THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM.

“The smartphone revolution is under-hyped; more people have access to phones than access to running water. We’ve never had anything like this before since the beginning of the planet”. (Marc Andreessen).

Most of us carried smartphones around for more than seven years, so it is hard to remember going through life without one. But there was a time when we all used to memorize our best friend’s phone numbers and use a pay phone. While today’s kids can’t even fathom the idea of not having the latest smartphone, we relish reminiscing about the golden days. We have almost forgotten the days; when we would wait by the door for our friend when he said he would pick us up at a certain time, taking photos on disposable cameras and getting super excited to develop them, dealing with immense boredom when you had to wait anywhere, especially at the doctor’s office, getting tangled up in the phone cord when talking to your friends on the landlines and passing notes instead of snapchats etc. They have been a lot of changes with the advent of smartphones around the world.

All those frustrating fun-times stated above that we’ve almost forgotten makes me realize that Marc Andreessen statement as stated above is really true and that smartphones have extremely change our way of life globally. But, what is smartphone?

A smartphone is a handheld personal computer with a mobile operating system and an integrated mobile broad band cellular network connection for voice, SMS and internet data communication, most if not all smartphones also support Wi-Fi. Smartphones are able to run a variety of third party software components(“apps”) from places like the Google play store or App store. Smartphones integrate and now largely fulfill most people’s needs for a telephone, digital camera and video

cameras, GPS navigation, a media player, clock, news, calculators, web browsing, hand held video games, flashlight, compass, a note-taking application, digital messaging, an event calendar etc.

In a nutshell, a smartphone is a device that let you make telephone calls, but also adds in features that, in the past, you would have found only on a personal digit assistant or computer such as the ability to send and receive e-mail and edit office documents. The changes that smartphones have brought to our way of live cannot be over-emphasized but the big question is “what is the impact of smartphones on the educational system?”

The question asked above makes me to ponder about what education and educational system really means before considering the impact of smartphones on the educational system.

Education is indispensable to individual and society, for without it, there would be loss of all accumulated knowledge of the ages and all the standard of conduct. An individual must learn the culture of the society or the accepted ways of doing things. He must be socialized into the prevailing culture and must learn the rule of conduct and expectation about future behavior. Society therefore, consciously devices its instructional programs to fulfil personal and social needs rather than leaving the learning to chance.

The term education has different meaning. Each person interprets the word in terms of his past experience, his needs and purposes. For example, to a student, education means acquisition of knowledge, receiving a degree or diploma, while a statesman may claim that it means to train individuals as ideal citizens. The meaning of education differs from place to place and from time to time. At every stage, it has different meaning according to existing social conditions.

John Dewey once said “education is not preparation for life; education is life itself” which can be connected to Wikipedia definition of education as the process of facilitating learning or the

acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs and habits which constitutes life as John Dewey once said. The importance of education cannot be overemphasized because “education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” (Nelson Mandela).

Additionally, educational system comprises everything that goes into educating school students at the federal, state or community levels. The educational system of any society depends on the governments, teachers and students but knowledge is shared between the students and their teachers. This implies educational system is equivalent to what goes on in the class room which consists of teachers and students. Nevertheless, the big question in the context of this essay is the impact of smartphones on the educational system. How does this exemplary magical technological device affect the educational system?

There is no broad consensus as to what the impact of smartphones on our educational system. Different people with different opinion, some believe it has more positive impacts than the negative impacts while some group believe that the negative impacts are more than the positive ones on the educational system. However, I believe it depends on the individual I.E., the user of smartphone to teach or to learn. I believe individualism matters here. The teacher can let the usage of smartphones in classrooms define him positively or negatively depending on the control he has over the usage of smartphones in his classes. The students can also let the usage of smartphones increase their academic performance or worsen it. Basically, it depends on the usage.

There are numerous positive impacts of smartphones on the educational system if it is well utilized. Smartphones have made education on our palm and its advantages cannot be overemphasized. First, smartphones are used as powerful participation tool in the class room. For instance, the website platform “poll everywhere” allows teachers to create poll questions. Students respond by texting their answers to a number and then live results can instantly be reviewed by the classroom.

This way, a teacher can quickly determine the overall understanding of a topic and adjust their lesson plan accordingly. Smartphones as a participation tool makes the class more interactive and its usage makes teaching to be as rich and as visual as possible. It makes students see things, not just to know it.

In 2010, a Professor of Anatomy; Professor Abraham Adewale Adepoju Osinubi was voted as the lecturer with the most positive influence on the students in the College of Medicine, University of Lagos, Akoka, Lagos. Professor Osinubi said in his inaugural lecture on the 8th November, 2017., that his students voted for him solely because of his adoption of mobile learning. He said most of his students passed his course well neither because the examination was simple nor that he gave them free marks, they passed simply because they have a proper understanding of the course. Professor Osinubi further explained that about two weeks to any of his lectures, he would have released materials on his website(www.profosinubi.org) for his students to go through so that they can all come to class with their confusions, suggestions, questions and criticism which were well welcomed by him. He added that the students fell in love with his classes and by default, they perform well and they were all happy with their performances. This triggered the students to voting him as the most influential lecturer in the college, so he said. The example cited shows how smartphones enhance classroom participation and this enhancement depends on the control the teacher has over the usage of smartphones in his or her classroom.

Another classroom benefit of smartphones is that they serve as a resource in the classroom I.E., cellphones can serve as a tool for quick reference in the classroom when it comes to double checking spelling, word definitions or even to look up alternative word choices, apps like Merriam-Webster dictionary app and the Webster's Thesaurus app are quick and easy to use resources. Additionally, being able to look up new article online via smartphones is a good way for students

to be able to consult and contribute to meaningful classroom discussion. The classrooms benefits of smartphones are dependent on the teacher's control over it.

Apart from classroom benefits of smartphones as stated above, there are a lot of personal benefits which smartphones give to students that utilize them well. Organization is one of the personal benefits. Smartphones has helped a lot of students to stay organized and on top of tasks, home-works, projects and deadlines. For example, My Home-work app is a cross platform app that students can access on smartphones that offers a convenient and intuitive alternative to the traditional paper planner. Students will receive notification reminders of upcoming deadlines, and they can easily input new assignments and projects as they come up.

Another personal benefit of smartphones is undeniable access to knowledge. Most of the smartphones have applications like google, Wikipedia that make students to have free access to what they were not taught in the classrooms and is needed in their course of study. Moreover, smartphones also give students initial knowledge on what they are about to be taught in class. Applications like You-Tube makes students to have a better understanding of any topic before coming to the class on that topic. However, it is the choice of the students to use such applications for that purpose.

Furthermore, smartphones have rendered education more convenient for students and teachers. You don't have to carry a very big textbook all around again, you don't need to get to the library before you can read. Students can now read anywhere because smartphones have made education mobile and the materials needed are right at their fingertips. It can be said that the advent of smartphones is leading to the extinction of textbooks among students.

One major importance of smartphones is communication. A particular student may be shy to walk up to the best student in the class for assistance because of inferiority complex. However, the student can pick his phone and message the smartest student for assistance. The teaching can even be done online if it is impossible for them to meet. The problem of communication and long distance have been simultaneously solved for the student in need of help. The benefits of smartphones on the educational system is infinite if it is properly used.

Nevertheless, just as smartphones have numerous advantages on the educational system, it also has a lot of disadvantages if it is not properly used. Cheating is one of the negative impacts of smartphones on the students. Students are always under pressure to do well in school. As a result, the occasional student may cheat on a test. Smartphones are capable of more than just calling and texting. Students can easily gain internet access through their phones during an examination. Additionally, they can listen to recorded answers, this is facilitated by “exam cheat equipment” such as inconspicuous ear pieces that students can purchase online.

Smartphones allow students to text, check and interact on social networking sites such as Facebook, Myspace and Twitter, check their e-mails, play games offline and online and even watch TV. This is extremely distracting for not only the student (because they are obviously not paying attention), but can also become distracting for other students around them. If a professor or teacher has to stop their lecture on instruction to ask a student to turn off his or her phone, it is also distracting for the entire class.

As stated above that smartphones allow students to interact with each other, watch TV, listen to music, upload videos, pictures on social media etc. This time consuming interesting things that is within the capability of smartphones brought about one of the most devastating negative impacts of smartphones on students which is called “addiction”. Students tend to check their phones often,

even in the classroom when the lecturers seize their phones, their mind is not in what the lecturer is taking them but rather on how the class can come to an end swiftly so that they can gain access back to their smartphones. Addiction has led to a lot of students' poor academic performance because they hardly find time to use their smartphones to study let alone carry their textbooks. Moreover, addiction of students to their smartphones have also affected their sleeping patterns which is known as insomnia. Most of the students are suffering from insomnia which also led to their inefficiency in the classrooms.

Smartphones are also used among students for cyberbullying and hazing. Before smartphones, bullying was limited to physical or verbal abuse. Now, smartphones can take pictures and videos, creating a trend called "cyber-bullying". Students have used their phones to embarrass their colleagues. For example, students may record school fights and post them online. Teachers are not immune to the bullying. Students might record their teachers losing his temper, then post it on sites such as You-Tube, Facebook etc. Common sense would dictate that these acts can be humiliating to the victims and harmful to the school's reputation.

In conclusion, it has been observed that they are both positive and negative impacts of smartphones on the educational system. It is actually determined on how much and for what purpose a person uses it. According to the founder of Android, Andy Rubin, the main aim of smartphones is "to incorporate a computer into a small portable device". It has been viewed that smartphones are devices with endless possibilities and this type of device cannot be neglected in the educational system simply because of the improper usage by most students. It is true that younger kids are exposed to immoral things due to smartphones, however, it is the duty of the teachers to have control over the usage of smartphones in the classrooms, it is also the duty of the parents to always be on guard. Eradicating smartphones for the negative impacts is like trying to kill a housefly with

a sledge hammer. For instance, to argue the topic of this essay, a smartphone with internet access, must be used. It all boils down to our choice. Caroline once said “never blame another person for your personal choices-you are still the one who must live out the consequences of your choices”. The inventor of smartphones created it to make things easier and not to rubbish the educational system. The positive and negative impacts solely depend on the choice of an individual. The students should be well directed well by their teachers and parents so that smartphones can be optimally used in the educational system. They can never be a broad consensus on the impacts of smartphones on our educational system. The choice is ours to make.

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