Nonfiction Essay

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Education: the Innovation of a Lifetime

I recently watched the Netflix Documentary “Period. End of Sentence.” This short, 26 minute documentary on the manufacturing of sanitary pads and education of people in an Indian village on menstruation opened my eyes to a world in which the majority of the population remains uneducated on the basic principles of human health and hygiene. After reflecting on the complete lack of knowledge in this village, I’ve come to some distinct and direct conclusions.

I believe that education remains the most innovative and effective technology to institute within any human system. Society widely defines technology as an application of knowledge, oftentimes in the field of science. As a basic example, applying digital and mechanical knowledge leads to the creation of an iPad. In a similar manner, the application of knowledge in human and health resources foments a societal change and perception on a particular topic.

Imagine the capacity to impact the health of an entire population of people on a macro-level. The power of education allows us to make such differences in medicine. This documentary epitomizes the power of distributing knowledge. By the end of the documentary, not only had the women found a sustainable method of income through their entrepreneurship, but also a platform from which to educate both men and women about the consequences of improper menstrual care.

This technology of education expands beyond these 26 minutes. As a media, the documentary in turn empowers those who view it to spread this innovation. The issue of ignorance finds sanctuary in virtually every nation and society. Women struggle to find a finger hold in both politics and culture throughout the conservative country of Saudi Arabia—only in the past few years did women receive the right to drive an automobile. The mistrust between native Europeans and Middle Eastern immigrants seeking asylum, caused by a lack of understanding between the two parties, leads to violent clashes and institutionalized bigotry. Even in the United States, the growing trend of “Anti-Vaxxers”, people who speak out against the vaccination of children, opens the doorway to citizens suffering from previously eliminated diseases such as mumps and measles.

With exposure to knowledge and global policies through education, we provide demographics such as these the opportunity to see multiple perspectives and make an informed decision. Of course, at the end of the day, people choose to believe what they want to believe. However, the opportunity to educate these people on all of the facts of an issue gives them every chance to see the consequences of certain decisions.

Education as a technology reaches every corner, age, gender, culture, and creed. It does not require electricity to power the brains from which it draws its power. This innovation needs no metal, steel, or concrete, but simply the will and desire of individuals to spread knowledge. Critics of rising technology companies express the potential for a specific innovation to die off simply due to a lack of reproducibility. Every implementation of education provides the ability to spread education, as every newly educated person now has the skills to continue this knowledge forward.

“Period. End of Sentence” opened my eyes to the importance of the technology of education on the scale of a small village in the heart of India and the world itself. Some of the most successful innovations in the world empowered, provided previously unheard of opportunities, and ultimately bettered people’s lives. In this vein, I argue that education should be considered one of the greatest innovations in our world. Something as simple as teaching Indian women about making sanitary pads and how to properly care for menstrual health can reach beyond borders. These women with the education they received were able to make a small business and improve the public health and awareness of their village and beyond.

Imagine the effects of an education-focused approach to other various public health issues or problems in science throughout the world. Imagine providing seminars and open discussions with people against vaccines, providing them with unbiased evidence so that they can come to their own informed decisions rather than simply fighting with them on Twitter. The adage “give a man a fish and feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and feed him for a lifetime” comes to mind when reflecting on these topics. Let’s educate mankind, and set ourselves up for success for lifetimes.