

GLOBALIZATION101.ORG
UNIT ON TECHNOLOGY AND GLOBALIZATION

Introduction

In this lesson, students will read sections from the Technology Issue Brief concerning the role that IT plays in globalization and the benefits of IT in the areas of health, education, and government. Students will engage in discussion about the reading to understand the issues surrounding the increasing use of IT and will learn about the possible effects of gaps in access to IT among different economic and social strata—commonly called the “digital divide.” Finally, students will partake in a group activity in which they will represent a country trying to undertake the challenging process of developing IT infrastructure and training and providing wide access to IT.

Student Objectives

At the conclusion of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Recognize the increased role of IT in day-to-day activities and human interactions.
2. Evaluate the benefits of IT in the areas of health, education, and government.
3. Define the phrase “digital divide” and examine its impact on the global community.
4. Identify and consider the process of building a national IT infrastructure.

Materials Required

1. Copies of Handout 1, “Discussion Questions on Improving Sectors of Society”
2. Copies of Handout 2, “Questions for Government Policy-Makers”

Time Required

2-3 classes

Procedure

Introductory Discussion

1. Have students read the “Introduction” to the Technology Issue Brief either in-class or as homework. This can be done on-line or in printed format depending on student access to computers.
2. Begin the discussion of the subject by asking students how IT has changed their lives in terms of knowledge, productivity, efficiency, and convenience. For example, what role does IT play in their daily lives? What aspects of IT do they use regularly? Do they own and use a computer at home? Where else do they use computers and other technology? Do they desire to use newer and better technology? How will this help them in their daily lives, school, and future career? Does anything prevent them from using this newer and better technology?

Activity One

1. Have students read the Technology Issue Brief section on “Improving Sectors of Society: Health, Education, & Government” either in class or as homework. This can be done on-line or in printed format depending on student access to computers.
2. Ask students to divide into groups of 3 or 4 and answer the questions on Handout 1. After students have addressed all of the questions within their groups, review their answers with them, using the blackboard to help organize student responses. You should use this exercise as a means to convey (1) the link between the three areas (health care, education, and government) and quality of life/standard of living and (2) the ways in which IT benefits these areas.

Discussion of the “Digital Divide” and Privacy and Security Concerns

1. Have students read the Technology Issue Brief section on “Digital Divides and Privacy and Security Concerns” either in class or as homework. This can be done on-line or in printed format depending on student access to computers.
2. To begin a discussion of the digital divides and privacy and security concerns, ask the students if they see any potential problems with the promise of IT despite the advances it brings. Students should understand that while use of these technologies holds great promise in improving the quality of living of people around the world, it also carries with it implicit risks. Ask students what these risks are. In addition to the digital divide and privacy and security, IT brings new risks and capabilities for law enforcement. Students may explore links to the CSIS Projects on technology through the Globalization101.org website to learn more about these issues.
3. Then, focus on the “digital divide.” Using the United States as an example, discuss the “digital divide” and what seem to be the factors that play into the gaps among Americans. Some questions to ask students include the following: Does everyone in the United States have access to computers? Who does not? What limits or prevents their access? What can be done to increase that access? If the United States—as one of world’s most technologically advanced and wealthiest countries—has such an evident digital divide, what about less developed countries? What limits their usage of IT and what can be done to increase that access?

Activity 1

1. Explain to the class that they will be in the position of a government that wants to build up and increase the use of IT, both in the areas of health, education, and government and among the general population, and consequently narrow the digital divide. Their job is to build the infrastructure and increase knowledge by devising a national program for this purpose. The program will include decisions about allocating financial resources to certain areas for IT development, choosing governmental and non-governmental groups to assist in the effort, and creating laws pertaining to IT.
2. After dividing the class into groups of 5-6 students, have the groups select a country somewhere in the world. Groups should tackle the fundamental problem of narrowing the “digital divide” in their chosen country and allowing people to benefit from IT.

Students can research the country by using Globalization101.org's links to governments, international organizations, and media outlets.

3. Give students a copy of Handout 2 that lists questions for them to answer about their country. Remind the groups that their decisions will depend on the type of country they choose to represent—for example, the government of a developing country may have entirely different responses to these questions than, say, that of a Western European country. After students have addressed all of the issues, have groups share their decisions in class. Other groups should comment on the ideas of each group, and the class should discuss the differences in each group's decisions and how the basic differences in each country's economy, demographics, government resources, etc., created the differences in the choices of the students designing the program.
4. You can decide on the length of time this group project takes and the level of intensity with which you want your students to engage in the activity. If researching specific countries is not possible because of time constraints or student access to the website, you can adjust the activity to be more theoretical, that is, not to focus on actual countries, but simply to discuss the questions on Handout 2 in general. Alternatively, students may base the discussion on previous knowledge about the United States or another country.

Conclusion

1. Discuss the concept of the international “digital divide.” Ask students what they think of the effect of the international “digital divide” on the division between developing and developed countries. Should technologically advanced (and more wealthy) countries even help the less advanced (and poorer) countries? What is the responsibility of the wealthier countries and how could it benefit them to help the other countries?
2. Ask students to think about an international program to reduce the “digital divide” among rich and poor countries. Which countries and international/national organizations would participate? What would be some of the specific objectives?

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Handout 1

Discussion Questions on Improving Sectors of Society

Health Care

1. What are some of the ways IT has improved health care?
2. How can health officials use technology to study the impact of health interventions and disease prevention programs?
3. How could the World Health Organization (WHO) in Geneva and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta use IT to learn of and understand disease outbreaks?

Education

1. What is “distance learning” and how does it work? What are the benefits of distance learning?
2. What types of countries can benefit from distance learning the most and why?
3. In what ways can poorer countries utilize IT for professional training?
4. Think back to the area of health care. What ways can the medical profession put distance learning in use to advance health care and disease prevention?

Government

1. How can IT create better communication and interaction between a government and its people?
2. The website specifically mentions that government activities and policies should be readily available for review by the public in *democratic* societies. Why would information sharing be particularly valued and even needed in a democratic system?
3. What does it mean to say that “[a]ccess to official information is critical to ensuring that governments are accountable to citizens?”
4. What type of information can be placed on the Internet that the public might find useful? Why would a government want to limit or restrict Internet usage?

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Handout 2

Questions for the Government Policy-Makers

1. What is your country like (e.g., size and demographics of population, size and type of economy, type of government, etc.)?
2. Which area – health care, education, or government – is your priority and what is your rationale for this important decision? Are there other areas to address? Think about who and what you want to target with your program.
3. What are your goals in each area (e.g., to attain a certain percentage of people using the Internet, establish national and local “e-governments,” put computers in the schools, etc.)?
4. In general, what type of economic commitment will you make to IT in each of the areas of health care, education, and government, or any other areas you have chosen?
5. What is the time frame of the project to build and increase access to IT?
6. What governmental and non-governmental groups should be involved in either decision making or implementation, and why? Why should others not be involved?
7. What are some specific ideas for improving IT in each area?
8. What problems do you foresee in the implementation of your plan and what laws will need to be created to implement your plan (e.g., mandates to schools and businesses, restrictions for privacy and security, etc.)?