

## **Why Education Matters in a Constantly Changing and Digitally Connected World**

John F. Kennedy once said that ‘The goal of education is the advancement of knowledge and the dissemination of truth.’ Clearly these are two things that humans will forever crave, no matter how much the world changes, and how digitally connected we become. Humans have a constant thirst for knowledge, and in my opinion, as long as that lasts, education will be as Nelson Mandela said, ‘the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world’.

Education is essential in a digitally connected and technologically advanced world. Ninety-three percent of Africans have access to mobile phones, yet only sixty-three percent have access to piped water. Shockingly, a mere thirty percent of Africans have access to sewerage systems, and only sixty-five percent to electricity (Afrobarometer, 2016). Clearly Africa is digitally connected, and does not lack technology; what it does unmistakably lack is education and infrastructure. I believe every human has a fundamental right to education, but for much of the developing world, this indispensable, constitutional, intrinsic right is one that is denied. In Burkina-Faso, 36 percent of the population are literate (CIA, 2015). What children and adults crave in these developing countries is education, not digital connection. Education is what will transform these countries from the developing to the developed, and is at the core of any digitally connected and technologically advanced country. South Korea is one of the most technologically developed countries in the world, but 60 years ago in its post war era it was in a more dire condition than most African states. Heavy investment into equal education however, has resulted in rapid development and an economic boom. Clearly education matters more to these people than being digitally connected or technologically advanced, because they know that it is education that will bring the infrastructure and development that they so badly need.

Education is an indispensable piece of the jigsaw that is political democracy. It gives people the ability to mature as au courant, active, erudite citizens. Education is about far more than accruing knowledge; it can empower people to develop both personally and politically. The Arab Spring represents a perfect example of this. Without the expansion of education systems in Arab countries in the last 20 years, the Arab Spring would never have come about. All of the brave, gallant, daring men who fought in these uprisings were products of the recently restructured education systems that spread throughout these countries, such as in Libya. Muammar Gaddafi placed a massive emphasis on education, in particular political education. Libyan students were required to study the ‘Green Book’ between the ages of 9 and 18, which educated these citizens about Gaddafi’s oppressive political ideologies. Scientists, engineers and doctors were the ones who fought so boldly in the Arab Spring for a right to more freedom, more participation and, in particular, for access to uncensored perspectives. Without education, political freedom would never have been achieved in so many of these tyrannical Arabian states, which is why it is of such vital importance. China has witnessed a lightning-quick development of its economy, and this would suggest that there has been a

major craving for education in this country. However, China is another country that has increased its education without offering more emancipation; it still maintains an extremely tight grip on its media, and its digital connection to the wider world is very limited. Turbulent times could be ahead for China, as it is clear that no oppressive regime will withstand the might of a well-educated workforce. Clearly, education plays a vital role in politics as it gives political empowerment to citizens of countries that are victims of repressive regimes.

Education aids people in developing the skills required to critically analyse information being distributed by the media. It has never been easier to access media, but the industry has become saturated with so many conflicting messages. I ask you, how do we decode and analyse these? George Osborne recently took up the role of editor of ‘the Evening Standard’, and yet is maintaining his M.P. status. How can we believe that the articles published by ‘The Evening Standard’ will not be heavily biased towards the Conservative Party? Fake news has become a prevalent issue, especially with the inauguration of the controversial United States President, Donald Trump. How do we know what is true and what is false? Journalists must ask themselves this question also. Education plays a key role, as it teaches us how to critically evaluate, probe and question what we are reading. The ultimate aim is not to necessarily find the answers, rather it is to develop the skills to question what we are reading, and not allow ourselves to become influenced by articles that are biased. Clearly, education matters as it gives journalists the tools to discern between information that is true or false, and readers the ability to question the media itself, and what it is publishing.

The study of law has never been of more importance than in today’s turbulent, changeable, unstable world. We live in a time where the advancement of technology has outstripped the progression of basic human rights, and where ‘fake news’ and half-truths are presented as fact on media platforms. Law and education are inherently linked. Knowledge of the law is intrinsically tied to the ideals of a just and equitable society, one where the needs of an individual can be balanced against the needs of the majority. Law, far from restricting the individual, bestows freedom on each citizen, and enshrines an individual’s rights. Educating oneself on the law, has never mattered as much as it does in today’s uncertain times.

In conclusion, it is clear that education is as vital a tool to the privileged westerner viewing Fox News, as it is to the subsistence farmer in Africa. Whether one is a disenfranchised citizen of an oppressive regime, or an undergraduate in an English university, education is the great unifier which elevates the lives of all.

(994 words, excluding references and title)

### **References:**

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