

BRIDGING DIGITAL INEQUALITIES: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF NGO „FAITHFULL GUARDIAN“ (VERNIYAT NASTOYNIK) AND LOCAL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION IN BULGARIA

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Abstract: This paper examines the distinct yet complementary roles of NGO „Faithfull Guardian” (Verniyat Nastoynik) a Bulgarian nonprofit organization, and a local educational institution in addressing digital inequality and promoting social equity within marginalized communities. Focusing on each organization’s unique approaches and challenges, this comparative analysis investigates the impact of nonprofit-led digital literacy initiatives versus formal educational strategies in reducing socioeconomic disparities. The findings highlight the strengths, limitations, and potential synergies between these two types of organizations in fostering digital inclusion and economic self-sufficiency among vulnerable populations.

Keywords: digital inequalities, social enterprises, continuing education.

ПРЕОДОЛЯВАНЕ НА ДИГИТАЛНИТЕ НЕРАВЕНСТВА: СРАВНИТЕЛЕН АНАЛИЗ НА НПО „ВЕРЕН НАСТОЙНИК“ И МЕСТНА ОБРАЗОВАТЕЛНА ИНСТИТУЦИЯ В БЪЛГАРИЯ

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Резюме: Тази публикация разглежда отделните, но допълващи се роли на НПО „Верният страж“ (Верният Настоятник), българска организация с нестопанска цел и местна образователна институция за справяне с цифровото неравенство и насърчаване на социалното равенство в маргинализираните общности. Фокусирайки се върху уникалните подходи и предизвикателства на всяка организация, този сравнителен анализ изследва въздействието на инициативите за дигитална грамотност, ръководени от нестопански организации, спрямо формалните образователни стратегии за намаляване на социално-икономическите различия. Констатациите подчертават силните страни, ограниченията и потенциалните синергии между тези два вида организации за насърчаване на цифровото включване и икономическата самодостатъчност сред уязвимите групи от населението.

Ключови думи: дигитални неравенства, социални предприятия, продължаващо обучение.

Introduction

As technology becomes more pervasive in everyday life, digital access and literacy have emerged as critical elements that influence the opportunities available in terms of both social mobility and economic opportunity. Having restricted access to digital resources, on

the other hand, might make current inequities even worse for historically marginalised populations. However, despite the fact that educational institutions and nonprofit organisations like Faithfull Guardian (Verniyat Nastoynik) play important roles in reducing these discrepancies, they operate under distinct purposes, with different resources, and with different approaches. The purpose of this study is to present a comparative examination of the community-focused approach to digital literacy that Faithfull Guardian (Verniyat Nastoynik) takes, as well as the formal educational method that a school takes, with the goal of giving insights into the relative benefits that each strategy has on digital equality.

In the modern day, digital inequality continues to be a persistent challenge.

The term „digital inequity“ refers to the uneven access to and utilisation of digital technology, which often leads to major discrepancies in areas such as education, employment, healthcare, and general social inclusion. Those individuals who do not have sufficient access to digital technologies are at a greater risk of experiencing developing disadvantages as society grows more and more dependent on these capabilities.

Factors That Contribute to Digital Inequity:

Access to Infrastructure: One of the key factors that contributes to digital inequality is the unequal availability of inexpensive digital devices and dependable internet access. This concern is especially prevalent in economically deprived communities or rural areas.

Deficiencies in Capabilities: A significant number of people do not possess the digital literacy that is necessary to successfully traverse online environments, which hinders their capacity to participate in educational chances, career possibilities, or important services.

Barriers of a Socioeconomic Nature: Because of economic difficulties, marginalised people are often prevented from gaining access to or making use of digital technology, which further widens the existing social and economic divisions.

Generational divide: older people sometimes have difficulty embracing new technologies, which results in their being excluded from the gains that have been made in digital technology.

Resulting Consequences of Internet Disparities:

Education: Students who come from homes with poor incomes are disproportionately affected by limited internet access, which restricts their capacity to engage in online learning or acquire important digital skills.

When it comes to *employment*, a lack of digital competence limits career prospects and renders many individuals unable of competing in a labour market that is becoming more driven by technology.

The lack of access to telemedicine and other online health services is a consequence of digital injustice in the healthcare industry, which has a negative influence on the health of low-income communities.

Addressing Digital Inequity The following should be the primary focus of efforts to fight digital inequity:

In addition to offering low-cost gadgets, expanding cheap internet connection is a priority.

It is important to provide programs that teach digital literacy to disadvantaged communities.

Advocating for changes in policy that would make digital inclusion a basic right and give it higher priority.

The digital gap must be bridged in order to establish a society that is equal and in which every individual has the chance to flourish in a world that is more linked via digital technology.

I. Literature Review

Research suggests that digital literacy is foundational for social and economic participation in modern societies, particularly in education and employment sectors. Nonprofits are recognized for their flexibility in addressing immediate community needs, especially among underserved groups. In contrast, educational institutions contribute to long-term skill-building but often face systemic limitations that can hinder their ability to reach vulnerable populations. This literature underscores the potential of combined efforts between nonprofits and schools in addressing digital disparities more effectively.

A new kind of inequality in society is emerging as a result of the proliferation of information technology. This new form of inequality is being referred to as digital inequality. Throughout history, discussions have primarily focused on two revolutions: the agrarian revolution and the industrial revolution. At the present time, in the context of the world, one can also refer to a „third revolutionary wave“, which is characterised by the incorporation of information technology and the digitisation of the economy, business, society, communications, and marketing.¹ There are now ongoing conversations on the use of business-to-business marketing strategies, such as content marketing and email marketing, for example.³

The term „digital inequality“ refers to the stratification that occurs depending on access to computers and the Internet. The digital gap is inextricably tied to the concept of social inequality, which is a basic tenet in sociology.²

The phrase „digital inequality“ or „digital divide“ emerged in the mid-1990s as a result of an evaluation of the implications of Internet technology advancements. It pertains to the concept of the unequal distribution of communication and information technologies. In the literature, it is conventional to refer to „haves“ and „have-nots“ about access to knowledge, which positions people differently across almost all aspects of their life³.

It is possible to consider digital competence and literacy to be one of the most recent global notions that describe a technology that is associated with certain ability.⁴ This concept has emerged as an essential one in terms of the information that individuals in contemporary society need to possess. Digital competence is recognised as one of the eight core competencies for lifelong learning, according to a proposal that was published in 2006 by the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union⁵. The advice was intended to define the fundamental lifetime learning abilities. This advice is evaluated in the „European Strategy 2020“ four years later, which acknowledges digital competence as a key core ability. The value of this recommendation is evaluated.⁶

¹ Иванова, Вирж. Маркетингът по време на криза. Девета научно-приложна конференция с международно участие „Инвестиции в бъдещето“ 2013”, ИУ – Варна, 3-5.10.2013, с. 501.

² Van Dijk J. The deepening divide. Inequality in the information society. London, 2005.

³ Milton, Daniel and Rogerson S. Kenneth. Internet diffusion and the digital divide. The role of policymaking and political institutions. In: Routledge Handbook of Internet Politics. Ed. By Andrew Chadwick and Philip N. Howard, Routledge, 2009.

⁴ OECD (2005). The OECD Program Definition and Selection of Competencies (2005). The definition and selection of key competencies. Executive summary. Retrieved on October 12, 2024 from <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/47/61/35070367.pdf>

⁵ Ferrari, A. (2012). Digital Competence in Practice: An Analysis of Frameworks. Sevilla: Institute for Prospective Technological Studies.

⁶ European Parliament and the Council. (2006). Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for life long learning.

Digitization and social networks as business tool⁷

Globalization is undoubtedly a phenomenon that opens up international markets for trade, exchange of resources, and even labor. Today, international entrepreneurship produces and sells its products and services globally through digital platforms, saving costs and time. Digitization, in addition to driving the internationalization of large corporations, is also a determining factor for the competitive advantages of small and medium-sized enterprises. Marketing refers to all the activities that a company uses to promote its products and services and improve its market share. To be successful, marketing requires a combination of advertising savvy, sales rations, and the ability to deliver goods to end users. This is usually done by specific professionals or marketers who may work internally (for companies) or externally with other marketing firms. Advertising on the Internet is growing both in absolute and relative value, becoming one of the main tools for marketing communications.⁸

The creation of social media and Web 2.0 lead to the emergence of s-commerce (social commerce) and facilitate the transition from product-oriented platforms that are typical in e-commerce to platforms that are highly customer-oriented⁹. In 2005, Yahoo first introduced the term „social commerce” by creating a feature on its online platform that allowed end users to create, share, and comment on product listings (Wang and Zhang 2012). S-commerce can be considered an „interdisciplinary subject that concerns business models and strategies, consumer and organizational behavior, social networking technologies, analytical techniques, systems design, business practices, research methodologies, as well as prospective ret-perspective assessment of business value”.¹⁰ Figure 1 provides a visualization of the key stages and historical moments of development leading to the concept of s-commerce. The beginning was made already in the 1970s, with the advent of the Internet or Web 1.0, which was commercialized in the 1990s and became increasingly important in our daily lives.¹¹

Unlike electronic commerce, commerce based on social networks is characterized with a high level of interactivity¹². The use of modern technologies and the use of Web support and the facilitation of online interactions (dialogues) and user input in the acquisition process through s-commerce.¹³ This allows consumers to respond to messages and thus encourages greater participation in the entire consumption process.

⁷ Ruseva, V., Contemporary

⁸ Luizov, A., Marketing metrics used in internet advertising, Jubilee International Conference: Contemporary Management Practices, Burgas Free University, 2019, p. 228 (Луизов, А., Маркетингови метрики, използвани при реклама в интернет, Юбилейна международна конференция: Съвременни управленски практики, Бургаски свободен университет, 2019, с. 228)

⁹ Wigand, R. T., Benjamin, R. L., & Birkland, J. L. H., Web 2.0 and beyond: Implications for electronic commerce. Proceeding of the 10th international conference on electronic commerce, 2008

¹⁰ Zhou, L., Zhang, P., & Zimmermann, H. D., Social commerce research: An integrated view. *Electronic Commerce Research and Applications*, 12(2), 2013, 61-68.

¹¹ Leiner, B. M., Cerf, V. G., Clark, D. D., Kahn, R. E., Kleinrock, L., Lynch, D. C., Postel, J., Roberts, L. G., & Wolff, S. (1997). Brief history of the internet. Internet Society (online), available at <https://www.internetsociety.org/internet/history-internet/brief-history-internet/>.

¹² Busalim, A. H., & Hussin, A. R. C. (2016). Understanding social commerce: A systematic literature review and directions for further research. *International Journal of Information Management*, 36(6), 1075–1088.

¹³ Liang, T.-P., & Turban, E. (2011). Introduction to the special issue social commerce: A research framework for social commerce. *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, 16(2), 5–14.

The digital channels that are used to market goods and services and reach them to the end user is called digital marketing. This type of marketing became more popular with the advent of the Internet in households in the 1990s, and includes the use of mobile devices, websites, search engines, social media and other similar channels. Digital marketing is a new approach to customers and rather a tool for gathering information and analyzing consumer behavior. Digital marketing is a different concept from Internet marketing, where the latter mainly refers to websites, and digital also includes email marketing, social media, search platforms and other tools.¹⁴

II. COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF DIGITAL INCLUSIVITY AND SOCIAL SUPPORT INITIATIVES BY NGO FAITHFULL GUARDIAN (VERNIYAT NASTOYNIK)

Access to technology and the development of the skills necessary to make good use of it are essential factors in determining social and economic inclusion in a society that is becoming more digitalised. In spite of this, considerable inequities continue to exist, which means that marginalised groups continue to lack access to digital tools and opportunities. By bridging this digital gap, we can ensure that everyone has equal access to educational possibilities, economic opportunities, and chances to participate in community activities.

This research focusses on the complementary roles that the non-governmental organisation „Faithfull Guardian” (Verniyat Nastoynik) and local educational institutions in Bulgaria play in tackling digital and socioeconomic disparities. It examines the techniques that these institutions employ and the effect that they have. In contrast to the community-centered approach that „Verniyat Nastoynik“ takes in order to cater to the urgent need of marginalised people, educational institutions operate within formalised frameworks in order to promote long-term digital literacy. The research illustrates the difficulties they faced, the successes they achieved, and the opportunities for cooperation that exist to promote diversity in the digital age.

The work of „Verniyat Nastoynik“ exemplifies the transformational potential of grassroots efforts by delivering individualised solutions to impoverished areas. These solutions include digital literacy programs, food banks, and scholarship opportunities. On the other hand, schools play a fundamental role in providing young people with the most important skills that will be necessary for their future success. The research provides light on the larger implications of digital inclusion and gives suggestions for the development of a society that is more fair and connected. This is accomplished via the analysis of two complimentary methods. The following analysis is based on an in-depth interview with Nikolay Nikolov, a representative of the Bulgarian NGO „Faithfull Guardian“. With a background in higher education and a career dedicated to supporting socially disadvantaged groups, Nikolov’s involvement in the organization spans over 15 years. He oversees the organization’s online presence, manages its projects, and leads a variety of social initiatives designed to promote social and digital inclusion. His journey into the field began in his youth, motivated by friends who shared their experiences working with vulnerable populations.

1. Organizational Mission and Social Initiatives

The mission of „Faithfull Guardian“ is to empower people who come from marginalised groups, such as the Roma community and families that are economically poor,

¹⁴ <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/d/digital-marketing.asp>

by providing them with critical resources and chances for personal development. This mission is supported by a wide variety of activities, including commercial operations such as a second-hand clothes shop and elder care homes, which assist maintain the organization's charity programs. These activities enable the organisation fulfil its obligations. When it comes to the conception, planning, and execution of a variety of humanitarian initiatives, Nikolov works closely with Zhelyo Zhelev, the founder of the organisation.

It is important to note that:

1. In partnership with local schools, „Faithfull Guardian“ organises educational campaigns with the goal of reducing the number of young Roma students who drop out of school without completing their education.

2. Food Bank – The organisation provides crucial supplies to low-income families and senior persons via a program that is known as a food bank.

3. Digital Literacy Projects – Projects such as „Linux“ provide free digital training to persons who are missing fundamental computer skills. This helps bridge the digital gap for vulnerable groups of people.

2. Duration and Personal Motivation in the Social Sector

Nikolov has been involved in the social sector in an informal capacity for almost 18 years. He began his involvement in the field by volunteering for youth projects, which ultimately lead him to become a member of, „Faithfull Guardian“. His motivation comes from the fact that he has seen the enormous effect that these projects have on people, such as giving food to those who are suffering during the COVID-19 epidemic and supplying school materials to young pupils. An American volunteer who was surprised by the horrible living circumstances in Burgas is one of the examples that Nikolov shares, which highlights the deep-seated problems that Bulgaria's marginalised groups are facing. Nikolov's experiences demonstrate the transformational impact of such efforts.

3. Project Impact and Digital Inclusivity

1. Internet Access and Digital Projects

As of right now, „Faithfull Guardian“ is in the process of implementing a digital literacy project known as „Linux.“ The objective of this project is to teach persons who have little or no prior expertise with computers. The provision of cost-effective digital education is the goal of this effort, which, in contrast to programs that are dependent on financing from outside sources, is self-financed and makes use of open-source operating systems. Burgas is home to a number of elder centres and social rehabilitation facilities, where classes are held periodically. Hands-on education assists participants in acquiring vital skills that would otherwise be unavailable to them. Participants benefit from this kind of instruction.

2. Addressing Digital Inequality

The organisation has found a variety of difficulties associated with internet access, notably among persons who are over the age of 40, families with poor incomes, and those who have difficulties with their mobility. Sometimes, these groups are at a disadvantage when it comes to digital competency because they have limited access to technology and societal hurdles that prevent them from developing their skills. An effort is being made by the „Linux“ initiative to address these discrepancies by offering free training that is tailored to the local community. These training sessions are being conducted in a number of different towns, including Sungurlare, Kameno, and a few others. This demonstrates the

non-governmental organization's dedication to inclusiveness, since the courses are open to students of all ages and educational levels.

3. Groups Using Digital Government Services

In accordance with Nikolov's findings, the majority of people who make use of digital government services are persons who are already acquainted with digital technology, such as people who use computers and cellphones on a regular basis. There are, however, some groups who are less likely to interact with these services owing to restricted device availability and poor digital literacy. These demographics include the elderly, those who are economically disadvantaged, and persons who are receiving care in an institution or facility.

4. Constraints on Digital Proficiency

It has been reported by the organisation that people who originate from families with low incomes and who live in rural regions have considerable obstacles when it comes to digital literacy. This problem became most apparent during the COVID-19 epidemic, when a large number of students did not have access to the gadgets that were required for remote academic instruction. This gap is being addressed by „Верният настойник“ via continuous training in digital literacy. Additionally, the organisation is actively seeking extra money to modernise its equipment, which will allow it to serve a bigger audience.

4. Digital Technology Use and Skills Development

Economic and Institutional Benefits of Digital Technologies

Increasing the visibility of active campaigns, streamlining fundraising processes, and facilitating more effective contact with stakeholders are all made possible by the use of digital technology, which plays an essential part in the organisational operations. The internet is used by Nikolov for a variety of purposes, including participation in promotional events, coordination of volunteer efforts, and administrative responsibilities such as the submission of proposals. Additionally, sites such as GoFundMe and Kickstarter have been very helpful in the process of collecting contributions from all over the world, which has made it easier to get access to the resources that are required for the organisation to continue operating its educational programs and operating its food bank.

Motivation to Expand Digital Skills

Nikolov has seen the beneficial effect that digital tools have had on his coworkers, many of whom are grateful for the increased productivity that these technologies bring to their job. The advantages of greater productivity and connectedness gradually fostered a wider embrace of digitalisation within the team, despite the fact that some elderly workers originally opposed the implementation of digitalisation.

5. Addressing Public Feedback and Challenges

Public Perception of Digital Government Services

Nikolov draws attention to a number of difficulties that citizens have while using digital government services. These difficulties include user-unfriendly interfaces, technological glitches, and worries over cyber security. Personal assistance in navigating these services, such as filing tax returns, which is a procedure that may be intimidating for users who have minimal knowledge with digital technology, has been provided by him to a large number of individuals. Accessibility, system stability, and a lack of competent support services are key areas of difficulty that inhibit broad adoption among people who are not accustomed with digital technology.

Digitalization During COVID-19

Despite the fact that „Верният настойник“ did not make any substantial changes to its hands-on operations during the epidemic, digital communication became more important for the purpose of engaging donors and organising the delivery of supplies. It was because of this organization's agility that it was able to continue helping disadvantaged areas, despite the fact that there were limits on physical engagement.

6. Digital Inclusion and Social Inequality

Role in Civic Engagement

Nikolov is aware of online platforms that enable civic engagement, such as public forums for discussing legislative proposals and petitions. However, he is uncertain of the effectiveness of these tools in fostering substantial political involvement among the communities they serve. Although these platforms offer citizens a voice, there remains a gap in accessibility and awareness that may limit their practical impact on political discourse.

Challenges of Digital Accessibility in Bulgaria

Nikolov perceives that, while Bulgaria's overall digital literacy has improved, significant gaps remain in reaching underserved populations. The primary obstacles include limited internet infrastructure in rural areas, lack of digital skills among older and less educated populations, and the high cost of digital devices. He suggests that public campaigns and targeted training programs could help overcome these barriers, emphasizing the importance of digital education in ensuring that all citizens can engage with online resources.

Collaboration with Other Entities

The NGO collaborates with local government, international NGOs, and private entities to support initiatives aimed at reducing digital inequality. Over the past 12 years, „Верният настойник“ has supported educational institutions by funding classroom resources, providing school supplies, and organizing donation drives. Notably, the organization's „Already Know and Can“ project has improved material conditions for over 5,500 children, demonstrating the potential of public-private partnerships in enhancing educational access for low-income families.

7. Digital and Institutional Risks

Cybersecurity Measures and Challenges

„Верният настойник“ has encountered several cybersecurity risks, including malware attacks. To mitigate these issues, the organization has established cybersecurity policies and regularly trains staff on safe technology practices. However, maintaining digital security remains a challenge, particularly with the limited resources available to NGOs.

8. Future Directions for Digital Inclusion

Nikolov foresees the non-governmental organisation (NGO) sector in Bulgaria undertaking more digital growth, which will be backed by increasing public investment in infrastructure and technology. To ensure that students and communities are better prepared to flourish in a digital society, he pushes for more budget allocation to pay the expense of contemporary technology and digital literacy programs in schools. This would ensure that it is possible for pupils to thrive in a digital world. To ensure that marginalised groups have access to digital literacy, educational materials, and critical services, „Верният настойник“ plays a crucial role in bridging digital divisions within Bulgarian society. This organisation

works relentlessly to ensure that these communities have access to these resources. The actions taken by the organisation highlight the significance of collaborative methods to addressing social concerns, which include non-governmental organisations (NGOs), official institutions, and international partners. With that being said, there is still a significant amount of work to be done in order to alleviate digital disparities, especially with regard to infrastructure and cost. Through the ongoing provision of assistance to vulnerable people, „Faithfull Guardian” makes a significant contribution to the development of a society that is more inclusive and technologically competent. This, in turn, fosters resilience and empowerment in the communities that it serves.

III. EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION - LANGUAGE HIGH SCHOOL – BURGAS

1. Institutional and Demographic Overview

Respondent’s Profile

The respondent represents a secondary school with a demographically varied staff and student body. Staff roles include teachers, senior teachers, head teachers, deputy directors, a director, psychologists, and a dedicated IT coordinator responsible for overseeing the school’s digitalization. Predominantly female, the staff ages range from 20 to 60, reflecting different levels of digital proficiency and adaptability to new technologies. The student body consists of high school students (grades 8-12), also predominantly female (55% to 45% male). Students are selected based on standard admission procedures typical to high schools.

Digital Access and Infrastructure

Both instructional and administrative duties are supported by the institution's provision of universal internet access, which is characterised by a dependable and high-speed connection (about 300 Mbps). With this bandwidth, a hybrid learning model, which includes partly online learning, may be implemented. This approach allows for up to thirty students who are in quarantine to attend courses virtually at the same time without causing any disruption to the school's activities. In addition, there are five computer laboratories accessible, three of which are entirely devoted to instructional activities. Lessons that need specialised resources are taught in the other two labs, which are designated as language laboratories. In order to support flexible teaching, each classroom is outfitted with a computer, and instructors are also given laptops and mobile devices to use in their classrooms.

Despite the existence of this infrastructure, there are still obstacles to be faced, most notably the high expenses involved with maintaining the most recent technology. To maintain their relevance, specialised courses like as graphic design and multimedia need the use of cutting-edge gear and software; but, budgetary restrictions often prevent these changes from being implemented. Despite the fact that the organisation is looking into alternate financing alternatives, there is an urgent need for educational institutions to include digital infrastructure as a routine budgetary item.

2. Digital Skills and Literacy Development

Staff and Student Digital Literacy

When it comes to digital skills, the workers have a broad variety of capabilities, with age and previous experience with technology being two of the most important aspects in deciding this. There are three major categories that make up the staff: younger instructors who are confident in their ability to utilise digital technology, middle-level users who are

comfortable with certain technologies, and senior academics who often struggle with digital adaptation. The implementation of continuous training, on the other hand, has often resulted in an increase in the acceptance of technology and the effective utilisation of it across all demographics. Participation in continuous professional development is a requirement for all instructors at the institution. This is done to ensure that all teachers are adept in the use of digital resources.

At the beginning of their high school careers, each student brings with them a distinct collection of digital abilities, the majority of which are mostly defined by their prior experiences. It has been stated by educators that children often lack core digital competencies, such as the capacity to manage data in a simple way. Students are unable to make progress in more difficult topics, such as programming, which requires a strong foundation of digital literacy, since there is a shortage of material that is currently available. The institution focusses a significant amount of attention on essential digital skills in order to solve this problem. These abilities include the ability to get information in a safe way and to evaluate online resources in a critical manner. It is envisaged that this skill set will be of assistance to students beyond the constraints of the classroom if it is achieved via the promotion of digital literacy that is durable across a lifetime.

Approaches to Digital Skill Development

In order to highlight the value of digital skills in both academic and personal development, the educational institution includes training in digital skills into the general curriculum across all courses. This is with the intention of highlighting the importance of digital abilities. Students are taught how to search for and analyse information, with a special focus on the capacity to design effective search queries and pick credible sources. Additionally, there is a substantial emphasis placed on teaching students how to search for information. In addition, the institution puts a strong focus on cybersecurity education, and it hires professionals from the field of cybersecurity to teach students how to maintain their privacy and safety while using the internet. Through the implementation of this method, it is ensured that students are aware of both the possible benefits and the potential pitfalls associated with the use of digital technology.

There is a significant focus put on the staff members' personal development and the expansion of their skill sets. Many educators, particularly those who are proficient in digital technologies, have engaged in online training. This is especially true of those instructors who have used online training. As a consequence of this, students often get qualifications that enhance their credentials for employment. It has become necessary to have these classes, which take up the bulk of the time that is required, in order to meet the standards of digital education, particularly

3. Digital Access and Inequality

Inequality in Student Access and Programs

There are certain students who have trouble utilising technology while they are not at school, despite the fact that there are digital gadgets and internet connections available inside the structure of the school. It is possible that the socioeconomic status of pupils has an effect on their ability to cooperate with digital tools at home, which has the potential to widen the digital divide in general. The institution makes an attempt to mitigate this issue by limiting access to the internet in general during peak educational hours and giving precedence to the needs of instructional activities. This is intended to help ease the problem.

Staff Adaptation to Digital Technologies and Support

4. Impact of Digital Technologies on Educational Processes

Educational and Administrative Integration

When it comes to the process of introducing digital resources into the classroom, it is the job of the system administrator of the school to give continual help to the professors and staff. It is extremely advised that teachers make use of the technology that is made available in each and every classroom. This technology may include laptops and other digital gadgets from the manufacturer. However, with the support of constant internal training, the bulk of them have become more comfortable with technology. It is worthwhile to note that some of the older members of the workforce continue to struggle with digital adaptation. This is an essential point to keep in mind.

Taking the fourth spot is the impact that digital technologies have had on the methodology of educational practices.

The Integration of Educational and Administrative Practices

Within the framework of the instructional and administrative processes that are carried out at the educational institution, the incorporation of digital technology is an essential component. For the goal of easing communication with the people who are responsible for the care of children, it is vital to have platforms such as digital diaries and electronic grade books. This will allow for the monitoring of the academic success of children. Furthermore, the utilisation of the school website and other social media platforms is widespread for the purpose of public relations, as well as for the purpose of enhancing the visibility of the institution and enhancing the connections with the community.

Because of the COVID-19 epidemic, which brought to light the advantages of using digital resources, the school was pushed to undertake the move to online education. This was a result of the outbreak. The educational institution makes use of both Microsoft Teams and Moodle across its operations. It is now feasible for instructors to efficiently monitor the quantity of student engagement during the duration of activities thanks to these two programs. Even though there were some obstacles at the beginning of the transition to digital, the transition was mostly successful, and students who have health concerns still have the option of participating in remote learning. This is despite the fact that there were still some difficulties.

Obstacles Facing Computer-Based Education

Teachers have observed that there is a gap between the amount of digital proficiency shown by their pupils and the level of motivation that they exhibit over the course of the process of remote learning. There were some kids who did really well in the online format, but there were also other students who struggled with it. Both groups of students had their own unique challenges. Although students often used electronic devices such as laptops, tablets, and mobile phones, there was a lack of in-person supervision, which led to instances of academic dishonesty. This was the case despite the fact that students frequently used these devices. It was not possible to prevent this from occurring despite the fact that children were utilising these electronic devices on a regular basis. The digital format, on the other hand, makes it possible to carry out comprehensive monitoring via the use of platforms such as Moodle, which is equipped with a sophisticated tracking system for the actions of students. With the advent of the digital format, this is now feasible.

5. Cybersecurity Measures and Risks

Cybersecurity Education and Protocols

Throughout the whole of the company, cybersecurity is accorded a high level of importance, and there are procedures in place to prevent unauthorised access and to guarantee that safe digital practices are maintained. The knowledge of cybersecurity procedures by educators is encouraged not only as a way of providing students with safety but also as a means of providing them with educational materials. For this reason, the promotion of cybersecurity awareness is a double purpose. It is common practice for the university to collaborate with experts in the area of cybersecurity in order to provide lectures on the subject of digital safety. Not only do these lectures teach students on the dangers involved with phishing and data breaches, but they also educate them about the dangers of misleading news.

Risk Mitigation

Despite the fact that the organisation has been the target of cybersecurity attacks, including those that include viruses, there have been no instances in which fake news has been spread. In addition to regular staff briefings and specific documents detailing requirements for digital safety, the institution's internal cybersecurity strategy contains guidelines for teachers on permitted internet use. These guidelines are incorporated in the plan. Within the context of the institution's overall digital security, this plan focusses an emphasis on preventive education as a crucial component.

6. Broader Implications of Digital Technology on Social Inequality

Impact on Social Equity

Through the implementation of measures that provide equitable access to educational resources for all students, the institution recognises the significance of the role that digital technologies play in reducing social inequality. These resources, which are accessible online, provide children who originate from families that are economically challenged the chance to get an education of a high level and reduce the inequalities that exist in the educational opportunities available to them. However, the teachers are aware that students who do not have access to resources at home may have difficulties keeping up with their peers. This is something that they are conscious of.

The business also seeks to reduce the gender and age-based disparities that exist among its workforce by implementing uniform training programmes. This will be accomplished via the application of standards. Consequently, it is probable that some socioeconomic groups will continue to have inherent challenges while trying to adapt to digital technology. This is a reflection of greater societal imbalances, which must be taken into consideration.

7. Future Directions and Policy Recommendations

Investment in Digital Infrastructure

To sustain and improve digital integration, the institution advocates for government support to make digital infrastructure upgrades a standard budgetary item. Upgrading computer equipment is crucial, especially for departments requiring high-performance tools.

Policy and Training Initiatives

Continued investment in digital training for both staff and students is essential. Teachers require ongoing support to keep pace with technology, and students need foundational digital literacy from an early stage to prevent future skill gaps.

Community and Governmental Support

The school also lays a focus on the need of enhanced cooperation between governmental organisations, educational institutions, and local communities in order to provide aid to students who have limited access to digital resources. This is done with the intention of offering assistance to students who are unable to access digital resources. One way to achieve the goal of equalising access to digital resources is to develop policies that encourage digital inclusion. One example of such a policy would be to provide financial assistance to families with low incomes so that they may afford electronic gadgets.

An excellent illustration of the revolutionary potential that technology has in the context of the educational environment is the manner in which the high school handles the acquisition of digital technology. Due to the fact that the school offers students with complete internet access, a dedicated IT coordinator, and a curriculum that includes digital literacy across all subject areas, it is evident that the school is devoted to educating its students for a future that will be dominated by digital technology. On the other hand, challenges such as limited financial resources, digital inequality, and varying degrees of digital competency among staff members continue to be an issue. In order to ensure that digital education is beneficial to all students and helps them to flourish in a world that is growing increasingly digital, it is essential to address these gaps via the implementation of policies that are adapted to their specific needs and the implementation of systematic assistance.

IV. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF „VERNIYAT NASTOYNIK“ AND LOCAL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

1. Goals and Purposes of Activity

The mission of Verniyat Nastoynik is to provide targeted assistance to marginalised populations, with a special emphasis on the Roma community and those who are experiencing difficulties in their economic situation. With the use of community-based projects, the organisation hopes to achieve its goals of promoting digital literacy, social integration, and personal empowerment. The provision of access to fundamental education, digital skills, and critical items are examples of the types of programs that are especially geared to satisfy urgent needs.

To put this into perspective, the primary objective of educational institutions is to provide formal instruction in all fundamental topics, including digital literacy. On the other hand, schools are subject to standardised curriculum and have limited funds, both of which might hinder their capacity to address digital injustices on a personal level. Their goals are wide, with an emphasis on academic accomplishment and preparation for further education or work; but, they often are unable to accommodate to the specific requirements of students who come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The development of long-term skills and formal certification are often emphasised in schools, which lays the groundwork for learning that continues throughout one's life.

2. Impact on the Community Relating to Social Initiatives

When it comes to providing quick, tailored solutions that directly meet the requirements of economically deprived communities, Verniyat Nastoynik is an accomplished organisation. In order to equip persons who have limited access to technology with the crucial digital skills they need, the organisation has implemented many projects, such as the Linux Project. The primary objective of this program is to provide adults and young people with effective digital skills that will enable them to navigate online

settings, get access to services, and seek career prospects. Additional assistance is provided to persons who are experiencing socioeconomic difficulties via the provision of educational scholarships and food banks, among other efforts.

In contrast, educational institutions include digital literacy within a curriculum that is organised in a prescribed manner. kids who do not have access to digital devices at home or who face other socioeconomic constraints may not be appropriately served by this strategy, despite the fact that it guarantees that all kids will obtain a fundamental education in technology using this approach. When it comes to supplementing resources, like as supplying laptops or internet connection, schools often depend on collaborations with charitable organisations. This is particularly true during the transition to remote learning that occurred during the COVID-19 epidemic. On the other hand, their capacity to provide specialised assistance is often hindered by the constraints imposed by policy requirements and budget restrictions.

3. Programs for Digital Literacy: Organisation and Availability of Information

Accessibility is a primary consideration in the development of the Linux Project by Verniyat Nastoynik, which provides digital training in community centres and social rehabilitation institutions located in the surrounding area. By focussing on demographics such as senior citizens, people with disabilities, and inhabitants with low incomes, the initiative helps to bridge the digital divide by making technology accessible to persons who may otherwise be excluded from its benefits via other means. The use of open-source software inside the program helps to save costs and guarantees that participants will be able to continue developing their digital skills without incurring any further expenditures.

When compared, schools provide students with training in digital skills as part of their official education programs; however, this training is based on the assumption that students have access to some kind of device outside of school responsibilities. The restricted availability of personal digital devices may be a barrier to academic advancement for students who are economically disadvantaged, which in turn can exacerbate existing educational gaps. As opposed to Verniyat Nastoynik, schools often do not have the flexibility to give individualised digital training to parents or members of the community. This is because the majority of their resources are committed to meeting the needs of traditional academic programs.

4. Problems and Possible Solutions to Address Them

Verniyat Nastoynik has a number of challenges, including the acquisition of constant finance, the transformation of social prejudices, and the fulfilment of the multifaceted requirements of marginalised people. The organisation has been able to overcome these obstacles by coming up with innovative solutions, such as depending on the help of volunteers and forming partnerships with contributors from other countries. Verniyat Nastoynik has extended its services by creating computer laboratories and digital training centres in regions that are often neglected. This expansion was accomplished by putting an emphasis on sustainability.

When it comes to tackling digital injustices, educational institutions find themselves in a difficult position. Because of limited funds and rules imposed by the government, schools often face challenges when attempting to provide individualised digital help to kids who are disadvantaged. It was difficult for many schools to make the shift to remote learning during the COVID-19 epidemic, which brought to light the need for more resources and cooperation with charitable organisations. Through the provision of digital resources and training, schools have been increasingly collaborating with organisations such as Verniyat

Nastoynik in order to bridge these gaps. However, owing to budgetary restrictions, these collaborations have been on a restricted scale.

5. The methodology

The approach used in this study is qualitative, and it is based on interviews with people of the community, school officials, and representatives from Verniyat Nastoynik. The success of each organisation in fostering digital inclusion was evaluated via the analysis of secondary data derived from organisational reports, case studies, and academic literature. The comparative approach makes it possible to conduct an in-depth investigation of the manner in which each organisation contributes to the elimination of digital and social inequalities.

6. The results

Influence that is Community-Centered

The fact that Verniyat Nastoynik prioritises providing individualised assistance and addressing urgent needs is evidence of the organization's tremendous influence on the community. Testimonials have shown that programs such as the Linux Project have made it possible for a large number of adults and young people to acquire vital digital skills. These abilities have resulted in better career possibilities and increased social involvement. Additionally, programs such as food banks and scholarship programs provide comprehensive assistance that caters to both the digital and economic need of the disadvantaged.

There is also a good contribution that educational institutions make to digital inclusion; yet, these institutions are constrained by structural restrictions. Digital literacy is a component of a standardised curriculum that is taught in schools; yet, socioeconomic gaps make it difficult for students to have fair access to these tools. Students who originate from households with poor incomes sometimes may not have access to personal devices or reliable internet, which hinders their ability to improve their digital skills. Schools were compelled to seek collaborations with organisations such as Verniyat Nastoynik in order to provide assistance to students who were vulnerable as a result of the move towards remote learning, which highlighted the digital gap that existed within educational institutions.

Analysis of Comparative Advantages and Disadvantages

Based on the comparison, it is clear that Verniyat Nastoynik excels in terms of flexibility and focused community involvement. This enables the organisation to rapidly adjust its programs in accordance with the different requirements of the community. persons who may not be serviced by standard educational institutions, such as adults with minimal education or persons with impairments, may effectively be reached using this technique, which is especially successful in reaching these folks.

Although educational institutions are less adaptive than other types of institutions, they do provide a systematic route for the development of digital literacy. It is the responsibility of schools to ensure that children acquire fundamental digital skills as part of their overall education; nevertheless, the influence that schools have on underserved populations is restricted due to the limited resources available and the limits imposed by regulation. The dependence of schools on standardised curriculum might make it more difficult for them to give specialised help, which is something that Verniyat Nastoynik offers via its community-centered initiatives when it comes to education.

Talking Points

Given that Verniyat Nastoynik and educational institutions are complimentary to one another, it is possible that a cooperation between these two organisations might

considerably improve digital inclusion among the population. Despite the fact that Verniyat Nastoynik is able to successfully address urgent needs, schools might benefit from adopting some of these community-centered techniques in order to better serve kids who are socioeconomically disadvantaged. Similarly, Verniyat Nastoynik might make use of the tools that are available in schools in order to broaden its scope of operations and provide more complete assistance with digital literacy.

Conclusions and Suggestions for Development

Taking into consideration the findings of this investigation, it is essential to combine the capabilities of educational institutions and nonprofit organisations in order to solve the issue of digital inequality. The nimble and community-focused approach that Verniyat Nastoynik takes is an effective way to satisfy the urgent needs of marginalised groups, while educational institutions provide fundamental digital education within a framework that is organised. By working together, these organisations have the potential to develop more comprehensive solutions for digital inclusion, especially in areas that are economically disadvantaged.

Among the recommendations are:

1. Programs for Collaborative Digital Literacy Schools and nonprofit organisations should work together to develop digital literacy programs that are geared towards students and people of the community who have not had access to electronic media in the past.

2. Resource Sharing and financing: Initiatives that include joint financing between educational institutions and nonprofit organisations might make it possible for economically disadvantaged students to have access to internet and digital gadgets.

3. Community Outreach and Engagement: Schools have the opportunity to embrace the community engagement model developed by Verniyat Nastoynik, which would result in the establishment of local hubs that would serve not only students but also their families and members of the community.

4. Advocating for Policies That promote Digital Equity Educational institutions and nonprofit organisations should collaborate in order to campaign for policies that promote digital inclusion, with a particular emphasis on providing funds and resources to places that are economically disadvantaged. Through these efforts, Verniyat Nastoynik and educational institutions can address digital disparities more comprehensively, fostering a digitally inclusive society.

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