The Information Age, Evidence B:
Life in the Information Age Class notes
Evidence due to be handed in on the 20th November 2005

Introduction

ICT has had a great impact on the way people do things in their personal, professional and social lives. These effects can be seen in areas such as:

- Working styles
- Communication
- Education
- Entertainment & leisure
- Banking & shopping
- Decision-making
- Employment opportunities
- Crime and crime prevention
- Civil rights
- Legislation

Working styles

ICT had a big influence on work styles and the way in which day-to-day tasks are carried out in organisations. ICT has affected the way in which data is processed, information transmitted and knowledge is applied. Also ICT has influenced the physical environment of the workplace (individual workstations), what workers do (less paper more ICT), where they are based (sometimes from home), their job roles, their interaction with other people (less face to face and more electronic communication) and their skill needs (often need additional training or re-training).

Communication

ICT has affected not only the way people communicate but also the means that they use to communicate. Today the preferred methods of communication are e-mails and chat, messaging and chat facilities. The emphasis is on speed, interactivity and collaboration. An example would be that word processing programs allow comments to be added to documents without the original text being changed. This document can then be sent as an attachment using and e-mail program to one or more people who can also then add their own comments and re-distribute the document.

Education

ICT is incorporated at every educational level and begins with ICT being part of the national curriculum from an early age. Students need to develop software skills to enable then to carry out research and produce course work as they progress through the educational system.

To support teachers and students a number of initiatives have been developed to provide them with resources that support both teaching and learning. Examples include cut-price computers and laptops for those with learning difficulties such as dyslexia. Local authorities have supported schools in getting access to the Internet and have developed ICT centres where kills can be improved. Internet access is also available in most public libraries. The agenda is simply to widen participation in the use of ICT.

The development of ICT skills is necessary as these transferable key skills are seen to be necessary by employers just as are maths and English competence.

E learning has also been developed for those who do not have the time to study full time and prefer to enhance their qualifications form home. Online courses exist such as those for ECDL (European Computer Driving Licence), those provided by Learn Direct and Webwise.

Check out the following sites:

http://www.becta.org.uk/
http://www.ngfl.gov.uk/
http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/
http://www.bbc.co.uk/learning/
http://www.bbc.co.uk/webwise/
http://www.learndirect.co.uk/courses

Entertainment and leisure

Entertainment and leisure pursuits have changed in terms of what we do and how we do it. These changes are primarily due to the Internet. Which provides opportunities for communication, playing games and other interactive activities. People can book tickets for flights, holidays and the theatre. Mobile phone and games consoles have provide additional ways to use the Internet without the need for a traditional PC.

http://www.ticketmaster.com/
http://www.lastminute.com/
http://www.games.com/
http://www.londoneye.com/
http://www.alton-towers.co.uk/resort/

Banking and shopping

ICT has changed the way people bank and shop. Older technologies include ATM machines, EPOS and EFTPOS. Recent developments have allowed for many transactions to be carried out between organisations and customers over an Internet connection, this is known as e-commerce. E-commerce includes:

- Online banking http://www.firstdirect.com/banking/current_account_external.shtml?fd_msc=CC113&WT.srch=1
- Online ordering and payment http://www.amazon.co.uk/exec/obidos/tg/browse/-/468294/202-1441010-7729448
- Over the phone transactions and services such as;
    - Mortgages
    - Setting up accounts
    - Payments
    - Orders
- Automatic stock control and processing systems
- Introduction of loyalty schemes based on information gathered from product bar-codes and customer data

Decision making

Decision-making has become more automated within organisations. Decisions have been taken away from certain individuals and have become part of an electronic process based on data, statistics, forecasting and analysis. For example when someone applies for a loan details are added to a computer system. The computer makes the decision on the loan based upon their income and expenditure. Designs for products such as cars are tested using computer models/simulations, which will show up any alterations that need to be made to the design.

Individual decision-making has change. An example of this may be that in the past we had to physically visit travel agents to make a holiday booking. The customer would have searched through brochures to enable them to make a purchasing decision; they would have physically paid a deposit to the travel clerk and received their tickets through the post after physically paying the balance. This

process could take months but now can be completed online in a matter of minutes. This has the advantage of saving overheads for the selling organisations and it saves time for the purchasers, in addition it means e-tickets can be issued saving on administration and postage costs.

Employment opportunities

The impacts of ICT on employment have been both positive and negative. The table below shows the effects on the banking sector:

POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
More streamlined and efficient services (immediate access to people via phone or internet links)	Loss of personal one to one services
Greater flexibility (wider payment options, able to shop around for best deals and compare prices)	Could lead to job losses or changes in job roles
More choice in products and services available online	Not everyone has ICT skill or feels comfortable using ICT to bank and would prefer a personal service
Convenience (no need to leave home for advice or to transfer funds)	Smaller branches may be forced to close especially those located in rural areas. This leads to job losses

On the other hand ICT has provided workers with ability to work flexibly from home (tele-working). Disable workers and pregnant woman have therefore been able to enter the job market and enjoy the advantages of reduced transport time and costs.

http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/bdotg/action/layer?topicId=1074446319&tc=000KW021864414

http://www.teleworking.org.uk/?c=38

Crime and crime prevention, civil rights and legislation

ICT has caused problems when we need to work in a secure environment. Legislation is already in place including:

- The Data Protection Act http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/bdotg/action/layer?topicId=1074448560&tc=000KW0220067 87

- Computer Misuse Act http://safety.ngfl.gov.uk/ukonline/document.php3?D=d10

- Copyright Act http://www.is4profit.com/busadvice/copyright/basic_copyright_facts/index.htm

Other legislation has also been called for to govern how we use the Internet and online services. The Internet is unregulated due to the fact that different laws exist in different countries and issues have arisen around downloading of data such as music files and other issues around the downloading and uploading of inappropriate materials such as child pornography.

Sites have been set-up that promote criminal activity, express extreme political views, and are racist, pornographic or unethical. There are only limited powers to stop these sites and those people promoting "free speech" argue that they should be allowed. Internet Service Providers have been encouraged by the authorities to monitor and discourage these types of sites. Sites have, for example, glorified or celebrated unnaturally thin images of anorexic females and have (in the USA) been closed down. Increasing individuals have faced prosecution for downloading images of young children and distributing them to other paedophiles. One problem with this is that the age of consent varies from country to country and therefore what is deemed inappropriate in the UK may be accepted elsewhere.

Other laws have been introduced to cover the "grooming" of children by paedophiles. In January 2005 a paedophile was sentenced to four years in prison for grooming young children.

Questions to consider and provide evidence for your report:

The Internet is like "Jekyll and Hyde…why would this be an appropriate comment? Discuss.

What would happen if the Internet were closed down overnight? How would this affect our daily lives?

How does ICT affect your daily life in education, travel and communication? Share your findings with others in your class

Provide a description of how ICT is affecting at least 5 different aspects of peoples lives, parents, grand parents, disabled, pregnant women, teachers, students, police, congestion charging, transport, tele-working, consider:

- Working styles
- Communication
- Education
- Entertainment & leisure
- Banking & shopping
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Provide a description with analysis of the benefits and drawbacks of ICT, which gives a clear picture of life in the information age?