Role of Culture in virtual Education

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Abstract. Electronic education is a new and fledgling industry in virtual education technology as well as advantages that exists in terms of electronic education. One of the most important reasons for organizing centers and institutions of electronic education in Iran is the increasing demand for education, in particular higher education in this country that has been turned into an issue in light of resource limitation and educational capacity. But this is really necessary to deal with such an issue? The aim of this current study is to investigate the effect of culture and educational culture on the development of virtual electronic education in Iran. The methodology is survey-descriptive and the statistical population is the student that has entered university in 1388 in non-profitable computer university of Tehran. The results have shown that degree-orientation has the most effect and the family has the least effect on the students' attitude and culture and educational culture.

Keywords: Education, Culture, Electronic learning, virtual culture, Virtual education, distant education

1. INTRODUCTION

Accessibility and control over information and communication technology and use of it in strategic work of education human force has been turned into one of the factors of power in recent age that should be taken into consideration. Ever-increasing progress of technology and in particular IT has brought about huge changes in electronic education. Factors such as reducing educational cost, easy access to virtual classes, diversity of subjects, reducing the cost of commuting and a lot of flexibility in electronic education has affected this phenomenon. Electronic education is new and fledgling industry in Iran but centers and institutions are trying to put forward a suitable pattern in line with educational and cultural structure in electronic education. One of the most important reasons for organizing centers and institutions of electronic education in Iran is the increasing demand for education, in particular higher education in this country that has been turned into an issue in light of resource limitation and educational capacity. Efficient electronic education can solve some of these problems, therefore, regarding the defined goals for education and university education in Iran, the importance of dealing with electronic education in particular; virtual universities in Iran can be easily seen. There is no doubt that traditional educational system in recent age cannot meet all the needs of informational society, therefore it is necessary that this old system changes inside and the process of adaptation can happen in line with the needs of recent societies. Age of electronic education in higher education has different discourses resulting in various understanding of the effective factors. Identifying these effective factors that can affect the electronic education is one of the concerns of educational systems. Higher education in Iran has established and set up electronic courseand it is facing inadequacy of researches arising from the real understanding. When electronic education has been understood well enough and has been put in line with the overall culture of the society, it might be the tool for development. But if there is conflict between this and the culture, this brings about the cultural delay and even sometimes cultural oppositions that in most cases, these will turn into barriers against education.

The current research propounds the necessity of educational culture and its effect on the virtual education so that educational culture becomes the path for development regarding the fact that

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electronic education is a new and fledgling phenomenon in Iran and other countries. At first, we have a glance at electronic education and then the researcher investigates the virtual education, culture, educational culture and their effects on each other and in the end, an analysis of the statistical sampling and results will be offered.

2. VIRTUAL EDUCATION

Nowadays, the internet has found a particular place in most fields such as education, business, and communication because of being good value in terms of cost, time and place, high speed in doing works, having high capacity to store information. Nowadays, electronic revolution and in depth technological has brought about huge changes in all dimensions of our life and moving global world to the point at which virtual education will become inevitable and requisite and makes it day by day easier and provides golden chances for educational boards and officials by means of catering advanced education tools. (The collection of articles of distant education, Fatoure, Mohammad Mehdi)

2.1. History of virtual education

Distant education has rooted in the old times and some believes that this dates back to the time of Plato and his pupil, Dionysus but as the evidence shows the first distant education dates back to the method of posting in 1728. Since then, different forms of education such as didactic, academic by means of corresponding, cassette recorder, media programs, videos and recently, satellite. After all, distant education using new methods i.e. use of new technology such as computer and more importantly, internet is a new phenomenon.

2.2. Establishing virtual education

The thought of establishing distant education was put forward in 1996 and the first virtual university was formed in 2000. England has put forward the scheme of virtual education for the first time but Americans has put this theory into practice for the first time. If computer education is via internet, it is called network education and if it has been done by IT, this is called virtual education.

2.3. Definition of education

Education is the process of learning sciences related with jobs and relevant specialties in line with organization goals that can make activities more useful and increase the efficiency. (The collection of articles of distant education, Fatoure, Mohammad Mehdi

2.4. The concept of virtual education

Using IT to improve the quality of education in network environment and multimedia with facilities is called virtual education. (The collection of articles of distant education, Fatoure, Mohammad Mehdi)

This kind of education is a tool for learning distantly and educational methodology providing students and professors with this chance that they can bridge the gap the educational distance using the suitable tools when they are far in terms of time and place. In this kind of education, computer, ICT, networks in particular; the worldwide Internet can be used to fill the space of education. In these courses that are offered by computer networks, not only physical tool such as blackboard and chalk are not used but also educational environments equipped with software and hardware are used. All the tools and educational forms that are used in traditional classes exist in virtual classes as well. Anyway, activities and the body of interactions have been carried out on the basis of hardware equipment, computer and worldwide internet. In this model, the virtual subjects are not put forward at the same time and students don't have to attend classes in

the university at specific point of time, but they can attend classes using their own personal computer and internet

2.5. Spreading of virtual education

the advantages put forward by the experts in the field of electronic education are lack of need for attending classes, having flexible way of studying according to the need of the student, use if team work in online studies, curiosity and more innovation and accessibility to the new technologies, use of up-t-dare information, possibility of learning at any time and any place and reduction the cost of learning. As it will be said electronic education will be the future of education and will turn the nowadays universities into museum because the basic investment of government seems necessary for the electronic education. (Rahimi, Nima, Zandie, Zahra, "the evaluation of electronic education in the system", 1389)

2.6. Features of virtual education

- use of powerful tools of IT and connection networks for putting forward the educational service
- The realm of virtual education is limited in terms of the global networks. In other words, offering education to everybody that has a computer and raises the possibility of connecting the internet network.
- Any sort of education can be put forward either at general level or at special level in the form of virtual education.
- -whenever the user or operator intends, he can learn because all the online subjects are accessible for study 24 hours.
- -time of online courses can vary from a few weeks to some months and it can be based on the time the learner has devoted for his studies. Holding exams at some specific points can be perceived as a tool for coordination the courses and its opening or closing are at specific point of time.

2.7. Factors of setting up virtual education

Comparative studies and review of the texts of virtual education has shown that the most important factors of setting up the virtual education system are:

- 1. Basic technology: includes the basic telecommunication systems (solar fibers, satellite receiver, microprocessors and so on), internet networks, ISP, connecting the educational systems to network systems and(Jafari, 176:1381)
- 2. Basic human system: setting up an educational system need to have technicians, education designers, faculty, students, programmer and managers as the user and main actors of this system. Also having wide body of knowledge of skills (familiarity with computer using word processors, surfing on the internet to learn rather than mere surfing without purpose, familiarity with software, multimedia, finding defects and removing them and.....), new approaches, change in attitude and eliminating all the mediators and reorganizing roles, methods and relationships are necessary. (Jafari, 1381:176)
- 3. Basic Pedagogy: changes in paradigms of teaching and learning, change in controlled education in class to systems of learning without looking at time and place limitations, new educational methods, new ecology and pedagogy, change from focusing on teacher to students, change from focus on learning to teaching, new methods of education and evaluation and........... (Jafari, 1381:176)

- 4. Basic cultural, social and value systems: spreading the culture of using internet, educating global citizen by keeping the national values, regarding the digital space and effort to spread learning and education fairly, customs in networks, change in social role of higher education, spreading the culture of new pedagogy (sovereignty of student) as the dominant organizational culture in learning and teaching environments (Jafari, 1381:176)
- 5. Economical basic: electronic business, money making, new methods of allocating sources and budget, new models of financing, marketing and spreading the educational markets, economy without middleman, investment efficiency, macro economy, indirect efficiency (having choices from subjects to professor, media, price, speed, method of learning and so on for the student)
- 6. Management basic and leadership: management of knowledge (emphasis on organizational learning rather than individual learning, spreading ways for sharing and accumulating knowledge in one organization and accessibility to expertise and skills of staff and changing it to the form that is accessible to everybody), taking mutual strategies of competitiveness and cooperation, new strategies of management and leadership such as collaborative management, dynamic and intensive research methods, international approaches and global attitude to organizational issues, making policies and law in the field of distant education in different realms such as the volume of work, the method of employment and faculty, issuing licenses, qualitative and quantative standards, guaranteeing quality and credit of information, electronic security procedures, acceptable policies and so on (Jafari, 1381:176)
- 7. Bureaucratic basic and supportive system: electronic bureaucratic system, supportive organizational system, technical education for students, professors and students, and digital services and so on (Jafari, 1381:176)

3. CONCEPT OF CULTURE

Farhang (culture) is a compound noun that has Zoroastrian roots and has made up of two sections of "far" and "Hang". Former is a prefix and the latter means to draw or to sophisticate. (Moeen, 1371,1139)

Culture in Iranian history of literature and in its old meaning is the translation of the word education that means educating and in many texts either old or new; we can see the effect of such translation. In defining culture, there are many other definitions and implications. Western thinkers and Iranian counterparts has dealt with this issue from their own perspective.

Education, knowledge, wisdom, personality, greatness, values of a society, scientific and literary works of a nation and so on... are different meanings of this word in Persian language dictionary. (Amid, vol 2, 766)

In Moeen dictionary, culture has been defined as "politeness", "education", "knowledge", "wisdom", "body of customs and traditions and sciences and arts of a nation".

Some believe that culture is the material and spiritual heritage of each nation (Kashefi, 1384, 23) it seems that the best and the most complete definitions has been taken from Edward BarntTailor and other definitions has been under his influence. He says, "Culture is the complex generality including knowledge, religion, art, law, ethics, customs and any kind of ability and habit that human as a member of a society can get it. (Ashouri, 1357, 224)

Ali Shariati has defined culture as body of things that are made and materialistic and spiritual stores of a particular tribe or race throughout the history. (Shariati, 1359, 14) therefore, culture means education, knowledge, wisdom, perspicacity, dictionary, scientific and literary works of a

nation, values of a society, the ways of living in a society and the body of customs, religious beliefs, knowledge and art and ethics.

3.1. Essence of virtual education

Electronic learning is a group of educations that are carried out by means of electronic tools such as audio, visual, and computer and network and so on or to put it simply, electronic education is based on technology and it can be an example for making virtual university. In virtual universities, internet and programs are mostly used. The way these universities offer their schedule is like traditional ones but in these universities the shape and the method is different because sites of internet can be used a lot. All the activities in a traditional university has been carried out personally and face to face but in modern ones this has been offered by means of sites on the internet. Registration, paying tuition, syllabus distribution, library services, holding conferences, giving exams and even interactions between students and professors can be carried out simultaneously or not by means of sites on the internet. During all this period, students do not experience universities physically. Therefore based on this rule, new educations and modern universities that use these methods have the names like, virtual, open, distant, correspondent education. In these institutes and universities, it is possible to see the special and time separation between student and professor, use of worldwide internet, use of multifunctional media that makes mutual connection between provider and receiver.

3.2. Educational culture in Iran

International researches about the culture of education have shown that education is cultural activity. Therefore, educational approaches and learning feed from the cultural, theoretical interactions. Taking steps out of these attitudes and methods of thinking regardless of cultural and social situations is damaging and imposes inefficient performances on the education and learning procedure. Tragic stories of consecutive failures of modifying education and authority oriented reform made many educational systems in underdeveloped countries like Iran in last decades avert any modification. Therefore, justifying the structure and thinking framework and education with cultural attitude is necessary and this must be based on intercultural studies, comparative researches and by the use of qualitative research methods and with a look to people. In the mind of the people of the east, learning is a kind of cultural affair that is ongoing and changing.

Studying and continuous practice in the concept of learning is the emphasis on the ability that can lead to edifying humans from the perspective of people of the east.

From Peter Senge's view, the English root of this word signifies the same meaning and basically this has been taken from the Indian and European origins meaning path and way. (Senge, 1994) therefore, learning has the meaning of increasing the capacity by means of learning experience and naturally this is a process that is flowing our whole life and needs fundamental change in our mind, attitude, view. Such a picture of learning is different from the daily conversation that conveys the meaning of saving and keeping data. Human needs learning and education and this must increase its capacity to be a part of life process of existence. Learning can help us adapt to our environment in order to develop its creativity and innovation. Therefore, the definition, process and education patterns of schools, syllabuses and learning methods and pedagogical aims in different cultural situations has taken various interpretations and can change in line with cultural social structures.

3.2.1. The survey of educational changes in Iran

Arrival of printing industry has made huge changes in different aspects of social life and one of these is big changes in educational organization, progress and increasing the students and different schools that in former times it only has handful of students. The low sound of teacher, sources and educational space and limited educational tools did not allow the schools to have wider circles of students. On the other hand, because of general poverty of populace, only children of high class castes were allowed to attend the schools because they could afford to pay the tuitions. (Arjmandi, 1368)

Anyway, the printing industry first used for publishing prayers and afterwards for various books at incredible speed and gradually publishing new books has encouraged studying. In the end, it created a need for publishing more books and publishing was on the role. Besides, printing industry has changed the process of making schools and its functions and it caused an increase in the number of the students and sources and a decrease in the teachers' duties as the spin of educational activities. In the 16th century, the publishing books were a great factor in technical and scientific changes. At that time, the techniques of printing industry were transferred traditionally from master to students and it was never on the paper. Book publication made the process of writing these techniques possible and encouraged the literate to study more and broke the monopoly of education. The description of the procedure of one technical task and more importantly, the image of this task for the first time has made a connection between craftsmen and professional scholars. This new possibility has made a great social impact and eliminated that old attitude that society is divided between the elite and the peasants.

In industrial countries, it is about one year that the educational methods of correspondence and distance and the inclination to modernization in education is increasing, but in non-industrial countries like Iran, situation is different. The idea of social progress and especially social movement has made students extremely interested in higher education. Our country's population is very young and on average 45 percent of this population is our youth.

The power of investment in the aforementioned countries such as Iran is very weak and as a result, providing higher education facilities from financial, human and physical is making progress but very slowly and to borrow the phrase, offer does not meet the demand. The negative growth of sources and positive growth of population and demand for higher education has widened this gap the way that the quantitative growth of students is on decline. Beside the mentioned limitations has had great impacts on the quality of education and has watered down this. Therefore, change in education structure and methods with the different aims and contents in comparison with other industrial countries are inevitable.

From this perspective, we can enter new field. In this respect, rather than beating around the bush about unimportant issues such as providing education in far-flung places or examples like this or in general, putting forward such an issue at quantitative level, it is possible to see the need for changing the educational method and structure. Secondly, these necessities are the same foe all educational levels. Huge increase in the number of students at primary level and high school level in recent years and repetitive declaration s of Education ministry for employing teachers plus interviews is indicative of this fact that they promise to improve the educational situation and welfare of teachers. Passing different bills in council and the cabinet to ban the evacuation the schools that are used to be school has become a usual trend in recent years, and it does not seem to be at issue till years later. At the end of mentioned year, banning the evacuation of the schools and the employment of teacher formally or for short term or by contract and running schools in different shifts can do the trick and ministry of education has to go beyond its limits and with freedom and respecting and believing in new facilities in modern time invent new ideas.

This is the reality that this old pattern that thousands of students should attend classes to learn and all hours thousands mouth pour out the same words as education and millions of eyes and ears gather together in the hope of understanding and learning has ended and besides there is no progress in this old system.

As it was said, distant education was not a quick and big bang phenomenon because its origin, development and growth is under the influence of the body of factors and new facilities. Usually because of lack of true grasping the factors creating the above educational system, there are different pictures and images of various castes and these are sometimes very superficial. In some cases, this method can be used as the solution for governments to meet these demands. This construal and the following results are very different from the role and the task the distant education has defined for itself and claims that this distant education can replace older one and it is natural because dissemination new phenomenon needs time to adapt itself with new environment without conflict and slowly. Among these, explanation and description of new aspects of this structure is very crucial and can expedite its attraction.

3.3. The basics and literature review

Various theories has put the issue of culture and learning into perspective. Considering the learning-teaching process is the issue that Bruner (1996) has put forward in his book "Culture of education". Accepting this fact that culture is inseparable part of any educational design (Edmundson, 2003), it is necessary that differences and social-cultural effects are put into perspective. (Collis, 1999)

"Culture is important factor in achieving knowledge and efficient use of it is in educational organizations (Davenport et al). In the field of electronic learning (White, 2005) has considered culture to be one of the four factors informing success in electronic learning. Therefore, in the field of electronic education, features and cultural impression must be put into perspective. There are differences shaping the use of technology.

The conducted researches by Hiltz and Goldman (2005) show the signs of cultural factors in distant education. Warschaor (1998) and wegerif (1998) has considered the distant education to be sensitive to society, culture and environmental factors.

Landson and Billings (1995), Saldana and Waxman (1996), Gay (2000) and Boyer (1993) believe there is connection between cultural context and class education.

In other studies that have been conducted by Baur and et al (2000), the cultural differences between Eastern and Western countries (Asian) have been defined in electronic learning. These studies have shown that the Asian students highlights this fact that lesson should be learned directly from the teachers. The learning environment of websites for Asian students signifies that face to face class interaction is going to be replaced with electronic communication. Learning via websites is equal to disconnection with teachers. Western students are familiar with the concept of student-orientation education and for this reason they grasp this concept much better and easier. Asian students do not have motivation to speak in the class because they believe they do not have enough information to express their view. Because Asian communities have strong bond with tradition, they are interested in accepting web-oriented education. It seems that the Asian students are inclined to form scientific-research teams with other students. Studies in Iran show lack of adequate researches. One conducted by Ma'soomi and Lindstrum (2009) that is about improving the quality of electronic learning in virtual universities from social and culture perspectives in developing countries. Researches have shown that there are many influential social and cultural factors in using the educational technologies in countries like Iran as well as educational factors. In many Eastern countries like Iran, "oral culture" plays a big role. This issue informs the environments of electronic education. in this culture, text tools

like chat has less usage in cyberspace. In many countries, Officials still consider signature more important that email. The review of the above researches has shown that the culture of electronic learning in western countries in western countries has been founded on the pillars individualism, personal need and passion, independence and self-assessment and on the other hand, this on pluralism, teacher-oriented education, less inclination to share information, learning based on ethical-security learning, friendly communication and inclination to use the situations that are structured, learning based on oral tradition and texts and less usage of virtual educational tools.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Because the aim of this research is to analyze the role of culture in education in light of virtual space, the research is practical in terms of goal and in terms of method it leads to using it. Therefore, in learning the effective factors, the gathering of data is descriptive-survey. The statistical populations includes 128 students entering in 1388 in virtual-computer department of Tehran university and the whole sampling is 50 students entering 1388 that are under analysis. The main tools of gathering data is questionnaire that adds up to 27 questions that fall into 5 categories of Likert using the survey studies including theoretical issues, designed questionnaires: 1. I completely agree up to 5. I totally disagree. The statistical population is the students of virtual-computer department of Tehran University and questionnaire are sent via emails and in the end, 50 questionnaires are accepted.

4.1. Validity

The validity is one of the technical feature of measuring and shows that the measuring tool can cause same results on similar conditions. Cronbach alpha has been used for coordination such as questionnaires or tests that can measure these features. Cronbach was 0.6. Regarding the fact that Cronbach more than 0.5 in survey researches shows the validity of measuring tools, therefore the tool used has the necessary validity. (Research journal of Isphahan, 1384)

4.2. Questionnaire Analysis

In this section, the achieved data will be analyzed. To answer the questions Likert scale has been used and the descriptive results got from the questionnaire are shown in table 1. By using the below chart and the averages that are calculated and number 3 that has been considered to be the average, it is possible to construe that because questions 24, 19,18,14,7,6,4,2,1 and 25 that have more statics that average 3, in our research, the level of influence that the family culture has is more than others.

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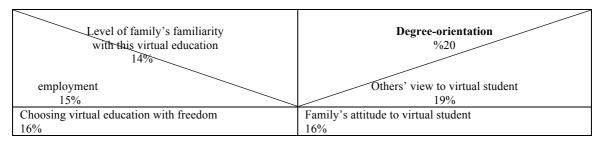
Table1. Average and standard deviation of society responses to the questionnaire (n:50)

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average		uo		average		uc		
statistics	Error of standar deviation	Standard deviation	Question		Error of standard deviation	Standard deviation	questions	
3.48	0.181	1.282	14. choosing this field because of not getting into another field	3.62	0.865	6.114	choosing virtual education because of full-time employment	
2.36	0.139	0.985	15. accepting internet as a learning tool	3.92	0.137	996:0	choosing virtual education because of being disabled	
2.76	0.136	96.0	16. internet was not an entertaining tool	2.76	0.153	1.080	achieving more info after experiencing cyberspace	
2.70	0.135	0.953	17. refusing that internet is the corrupting factor	3.28	0.151	1.070	4. having thorough information from strudent	
3.44	0.165	1.163	18. virtual student was the same as student in public university from the family's perspective	2.36	0.153	1.083	5. choosing virtual education of his own accord	
3.12	0.166	1.172	19. the virtual student is like other students from other universities from family's view	3.94	0.138	0.978	6. the family's will was the reason for choosing virtual education	
2.84	0.147	1.037	20. the effect of level of education on choosing the sort of education	3.12	0.173	1.223	7 choosing virtual education because of improving knowledge, power and status	
2.32	0.160	1.133	21. not being disparaged by family for being a virtual student	2.52	0.181	1.282	8. choosing virtual education because of getting degree	
2.54	0.160	1.129	not being disparaged by relatives for being a virtual student	2.58	0.194	1.372	9. choosing virtual education because of employment and accessibility of this education	
2.86	0.174	1.229	not being disparaged by friends for being a virtual student	1.62	0.099	0.697	10. lac of fear of working with new technologies	
3.28	0.151	1.07	not being disparaged by society for being a virtual student	2.62	0.156	1.15	11. the positive attitude of the family was effective on choosing virtual education	
3.88	0.153	1.08	25. the virtual university is natural from the view of society	2.32	0.123	0.868	12. family had the necessary info about this sort of education	
,				2.80	0.190	1.34	13. choosing virtual education because of not getting into another university	

Table 2. Prioritizing the effective variables under research in culture role in education

Average of grades	Priority of variables	variables	number	row
4.69	4	Choosing this system with freedom	50	1
5.92	1	Degree-orientation	50	2
4.17	5	employment	50	3
3.09	8	Family's effects on the attitude of students	50	4
3.77	7	Family's attitude to internet	50	5
4.82	3	Family's attitude to virtual student	50	6
5.44	2	Others' attitude to virtual students	50	7
4.10	6	Level of familiarity of families and students with this education	50	8

Table 3. prioritizing sections



5. CONCLUSION

The big plans of Iran in twenty-year prospect of development is based on wisdom and supporting intellectual capital and providing social-cultural bed that indirectly backs the arrival of technologies and permissible education. Although virtual education occurs in the learning space, but the right usage of is to reach the high goal of this society and achieving its ideal in real world. This aim and ideal procedure will come true when the virtual education and the social and cultural factors are under microscope in order to show whether virtual education is a need or social and cultural factors are chances to reach and manifest the values and high rules and can bolster the cultural, social of society and cultural interaction. These factors must develop or these are threats in various fields and cause the cultural invasion, cultural oppression, conflict and decadence of Iran's foundation. (Yamini, 1382)

Analysis the results of the above test show that the role of culture in educating via virtual space for families in 1388 was in this way:

In respect of the suitable samples that are used in this research, the results can be generalized to all students in computer department of Tehran University. All in all, the point is that despite mentioning all sources of the technical problems and connective infrastructures as the great challenge for the developing countries in the face of electronic education, the most important barriers in the way of learning of Iranian students are non-technical issues such as cultural problems, unfamiliarity of families and negative attitude of students and society to this system. And the aforementioned results confirm this dire problem.

5.1. Suggestion

In respect of the results, these suggestions can be made:

Regarding the first priority of the results of this research, "degree-orientation", a thorough research must be conducted to identify the causes and the factors.

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The virtual education must be organized in line with popular education and improve the culture and the virtual education must not take place for the sole reason of getting a degree.

Globalization and development of virtual education must take place in line with cultural infrastructure and this must start from the families.

Regarding the second priority, the results of this research, "others and society's attitude" to virtual education. The officials must take the necessary steps to culturalize this in regard to admitting the virtual students.

To remove the barriers of learning, especially in the field that there are not adequate supporting culture from lack of familiarity with English language and little knowledge of students about computers, necessary investments must be done.

Use of Internet which is one of the biggest technologies in the modern world and the changes in communication field that exist in the world is inevitable but this does not signify that all the ruling contents and culture must be accepted. In the complicated space of internet that one person consciously or unconsciously are invade by the swarm of cultural and informational waves, it is better to choose rather than leaving you to theses waves. Use of internet can increase the dangers and negative results because either the individual is limited in using this possibility or without right education, the person is at stake from the threats that this cyberspace can make. (Because banning the use of internet in Islamic culture has lost its efficiency and made the person more greedy and thirsty). The best strategy is the replacement with guidance and management instead of limitation. (Molana, Hamid, 1379)

Regarding the importance of mental interpretation of the accessibility, it might be suggested that education must be high on the agenda so as to remove the anxiety from using this new technology.

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