

‘Digital education an opportunity for a better world’

Interview with Jan Kunzl

Jan Kunzl works on ‘Focus Human Rights’, a project of the German non-profit /e-politik.de/ e.V. and edeos-digital education. The ‘Focus Human Rights’ series consists of:

Introduction movie: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kbul3hxYGNU>

First Dimension: Civil and Political rights, Violations, History

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3L4r47WiqMw>

Second Dimension: Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, NGOs, Women's Rights

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k0lsAYnBNaM>

Third Dimension: Collective Rights, Justiciability, Improvements

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AEO6xRpo024>

How did you get the idea of digital education? Explain what it means and why you think it is so critical in today’s world.

We are facing a digital revolution which might turn out to be of a similar importance to the industrial revolution. It goes without saying that such a change affects how we gather and share information, and how we learn in general. The digitalization of education brings a number of huge opportunities. It paves the way for new didactical approaches, which are more network-oriented, interdisciplinary and motivating.

Another important aspect, especially for our project, is that it is possible to reproduce digital educational material at no cost. With one investment, we can therefore produce an educational video that can be used and shared worldwide, by any number of individuals and institutions.

Making education more accessible and affordable, especially in developing countries, is a great opportunity to create a better world.

What impact have your Focus Human Rights series made on civil society, both in Germany and internationally?

It is hard to analyse what impact has been created on the hundreds of thousands of individual viewers. Through personal feedback however, we are aware that NGOs and governmental institutions throughout the world are keen to have this toolbox for many types of educational trainings. In particular, small NGOs from developing countries, which mostly do not have the financial means to produce high quality material on their own.

Who works on these videos, and how do you gather your material?

It’s a small team, consisting of my colleague Jörn Barkemeyer, who is a specialist in filmmaking and motion design, and myself, a political scientist.

What role do you think these videos, as well as digital education in general, can have on human rights education and awareness within society?

The videos and other digital educational material are definitely not changing the game alone. However, they can have a considerable impact as a supportive tool for other more focused activities like trainings, workshops, discussions and so on.

Are some societies more open to digital education, or would there be a bigger impact on some societies rather than others? Why and in what way?

First of all, digital education depends on certain technical preconditions, like computers, smartphones or internet access. I would say that countries which are characterized by a recent strong development but still unequal and mostly weak educational institutions, such as the BRIC states, have a particularly great potential for digital education.

Another example from our Human Rights Project are the Arab states. We have a strong emphasis on Social Media as a mode of diffusing the videos, which works very well in this part of the world. In the wake of the Arab Revolutions a huge number of Facebook Pages and Twitter accounts were created, often with very high numbers of Fans/Followers. Altogether, they can be seen as a digital Pan-Arabian public sphere by now.

Many governments, particularly in Asia, are increasing censorship on the internet. What do you think of this trend?

I guess these states are aware of the dangers the internet brings to traditional forms of executing (authoritarian) power. The already mentioned Arab Revolutions were not, as some observers claim, Facebook revolutions. But Social Media and digital communication in general played a very important role.

Would you like to share any particular anecdote regarding your experience with digital education, or something that motivated you?

We are always happy when we learn that our output has a direct impact--for example, when small NGOs like NOPRIN (Network of Police Reform) in Nigeria or **Childrens First Suriname** tell us, that they use our videos in workshops.

What is your next project?

We are still working on some of the translations of the recent clips. Additionally we are producing a video about the Rights of the Child for kids. After that, we will see, what comes next!

[Footnote for first page] Jan Künzl is a political scientist based in Berlin, Germany, with a special interest in International Politics and Global Learning. He is the Co-Founder of edeos-digital education (with Jörn Barkemeyer) and manager of the project WissensWerte.