

Synergizing PR 3.0, Web 3.0, and New Technologies in Producing an Effective Online Higher Education Scheme in Afghanistan

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Abstract

The study explores how to synergize Public Relations 3rd Generation (PR3.0), 3rd generation of the web (Web3.0), and new technologies to have an effective interactive online higher education (OHE) in Afghanistan. It analyzed the distinguishing characteristics of the three concepts by focusing on their application in the context of OHE in the country, aiming to assess the trio's compatibility in Afghanistan. Thus, a prescriptive methodology was used in this study. The findings indicate that the trio possesses common individualities that could be applied productively in the context of Afghanistan for collaborative higher education. The communal features include interactivity, ubiquity, and mobility, which indicate the compatibility of the concepts in the country. New technologies are accessible with the light version of applications for low-speed internet and are installable in smartphones showing their usability. The 3rd generation of public relations (PR3.0) should be synergized with the two others to produce an effective online scheme of higher education in Afghanistan.

Keywords: Collaborative Education; Interactive Technology; Online Education; PR3.0; Web 3.0

هم‌افزایی نسل سوم روابط عمومی، نسل سوم شبکه جهانی وب و فن‌آوری‌های جدید در تولید یک طرح آموزش عالی مؤثر آنلاین در افغانستان

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این تحقیق، چگونگی هم‌افزایی روابط عمومی نسل سوم (PR3.0)، نسل سوم وب (Web3.0) و فن‌آوری‌های جدید برای داشتن یک آموزش عالی موثر و تعاملی آنلاین (OHE) در افغانستان را بررسی کرده است. هم‌چنان این تحقیق، ویژگی‌های متمایز سه مفهوم را با تمرکز بر کاربرد آنها در زمینه تحصیلات عالی در کشور، با هدف ارزیابی سازگاری این سه مفهوم در وضعیت افغانستان، تحلیل کرده است. در این پژوهش از روش تجویزی استفاده شده است. یافته‌های این مطالعه نشان داد که این سه تخصص دارای ویژه‌های مشترکی هستند که می‌توانند در زمینه افغانستان به طور مؤثر برای تحصیلات عالی مشارکتی اعمال شوند. ویژگی‌های مشترک شامل تعامل، فراگیر بودن و سیار بودن است که نشان دهنده سازگاری این مفاهیم در افغانستان است. تکنالوژی‌های جدید با نسخه سبک برنامه‌های کاربردی برای اینترنت کم‌سرعت قابل دسترسی بوده و در گوشی‌های هوشمند قابل نصب می‌باشند. این ویژه‌گی، قابلیت استفاده یا کاربردی بودن آن‌ها را نشان می‌دهند. نسل سوم روابط عمومی (PR3.0) باید با دو مورد دیگر هم‌افزایی شود تا یک طرح آنلاین موثر آموزش عالی در افغانستان تولید شود.

Introduction

The development of public relations has been strongly linked with the development of technologies in history. Even though there was no understanding of the concept, the main three elements of public relations were in practice amongst primary communities in ancient history. Bernays (1998, as cited in Tromback and Kioussis, 2011) states that informing people, integrating people, and motivating people are the main elements of public relations that were in practice in ancient history. Public relations critically developed from that date, and technologies had a clear role in developing the discipline.

Public relations have played different roles and stood in various positions, considering its impact on society and organizations. Thus, the profession's primary role was simple congratulation and condolence messages. Then, the profession moved to another stage that played a much better role and had a more significant impact in which it was able to respond to an event. Scholars define this role as the job of justification. From there, the profession focused on analyzing tasks to be performed in an organization. In this stage, public relations respond and explore the events. This process is mainly organizational-based and in the services of the institutions. Then, public relations stood in the position of advertising and marketing. The primary task of the profession was to focus on selling and purchasing goods and services. Thus, it could be called the product-based stage role of public relations.

Gradually, the customer found their significance in the organization's decision-making, and public relations understood this vital factor for the development of an organization. Therefore, this stage is called Spotlight. At the next step, transparency became very important, and public relations played a role in which the profession should be a barrier to the customer. Still, instead, the customer could access an organization's manager. This is the stage that scholars termed as the Glassing Room. And finally, public relations needed to make a network and maintain channels of communication with the network to reach success. This stage is likened to the nerves in the human body. In this stage, the role of interactive technologies become vital. Therefore, the concept of advanced public relations emerged into existence.

The stages of public relations relevant to its role, impact, and position in the organization indicate that public relations' historical development can be classified into three main categories: traditional, advanced, and the next generation. Traditional public relations mean the then new emerging concept in which it functioned in the organization in a way that mostly provided services for an organization offline. The basic technologies (i.e., type machine, printer, etc.) were power-enhancing tools. However, the emergence of new technology shaped the nature of Public Relations in a more persuasive and greater reach approach, particularly the World Wide Web (www), which affected public relations reach and impact aggressively and extensively. The 1st generation of the web or Web 1.0 facilitated one-way services such as email in public relations. The 2nd generation (i.e., web 2.0) fostered interactivity in public relations. The interactivity and two-way communications further improved the services and public relations' importance in organizations. The 2nd generation of public relations (PR 2.0) is effectively linked with the web2.0. This is the stage that is called advanced public relations. It is while that there is 3rd generation of the web (web3.0) in use in the world that facilitates more interactivity in public relations. It means that the next generation of public relations (PR3.0) could be based on web3.0. This is a shift from power-enhancing technologies to knowledge-enhancing technologies where public relations operate globally with profound meaning and reach in the industry, boosting positive and beneficial relations among the host organizations and the public.

What would be the effectiveness of interactivity for higher education is the question that this study will deal with. Interactivity without technologies that provide such services is not possible. So, education, notably higher education, is a two-way communication process in which teachers and students should interact to have an effective and productive education. Furthermore, what technologies will be in the services of public relations in the future and could be used for effective online higher education in Afghanistan, and what would be the role of public relations in the processes are the questions yet to be answered in this study.

Conceptual Review

This study mainly focuses on the three basic concepts of public relations, including PR3.0, web3.O, and new educational technologies. The concepts will be explained later in this section individually.

Public relations

it is a profession and/or discipline primarily focusing on branding through strategic communication management. There are different definitions of public relations, and scholars define this discipline as chalk and cheese. Cutlip (2002, as cited by Darwishean & Jawad, 2022) defines public relations as “the management distinct function that identifies, establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the public on whom its successes or failure depends.” Public relations departments of universities in Afghanistan define it as “a strategic communication system for establishing and maintaining mutual understanding between an organization and its public, ensuring long-term meaningful and mutually beneficial relations” (MoHE, Cluster of Public Relations, 8 – 12 January 2023).

On the other hand, PR3.0, or the 3rd generation of public relations, is an advanced version of public relations that highly depends on new and interactive technologies. This type of public relations has yet to come into existence, but as the web3.O is already in practice, it will soon turn into practice within the organizations. PR 3.0 is distinguished from the two other generations based on its distinctive characteristics of global public relations, informational society instead of industrial society, decentralized instead of centralized approach of management, and knowledge enhancement other than power-enhancing technologies.

Web 3.0 is called the 3rd generation of the World Wide Web, and some very distinctive distinguishes it from the 1st and 2nd generations. The web comprises a semantic web, artificial intelligence, 3D graphics, connectivity, and ubiquity (Mousavi, 2020). It means that web3.O could assist humans in doing assignments and activities. This technology can be leveraged in online higher education in any country, particularly in Afghanistan, because of its characteristics of connectivity, usability, ubiquity, and accessibility.

New Technologies mean that advanced technologies are used in providing education services, considering collaborative learning, which is an effective way of learning and performing in the increasingly competitive world. Thousands of applications and platforms are developed to provide services of online and collaborative education. Still, some of them are very applicable, effective, user-friendly, and famous, such as Zoom, Google Classroom, Jamboard, Whiteboard, WhatsApp, Skype, Padlet, and Google Drive, to name a few. One of the primary advantages of these technologies is that they can be available in very light versions compatible with any operating system working with low-speed internet.

Online Higher Education and New Technologies, in a very competitive environment, and the complicated situation make people busy in their businesses. On the other hand, they must build their capacity and achieve more in higher education to succeed. Hence, people will lack time to attend in-person classes as they may waste their precious time in traffic jumps, traffic lights, bus and metro stations, and many other constraints. Fortunately, the new technologies facilitated managing time effectively and productively. Online higher education is a strategy that people can have as an option and has been recently boosted by technological breakthroughs. Different technologies and software are helping and enhancing online higher education. Synergizing these technologies will effectively transform online higher education in any country.

Theoretical Framework

The theory of Online Collaborative Learning (OCL) is used as a base for the study to be streamlined and focused on the study based on the principles of the theory. OCL provides facilities of the Internet to provide learning environments that further collaboration and knowledge building in a virtual space (Harasim, 2012, as cited in Picciano, 2021). Harasim (2012, as cited in Picciano, 2021) states that OCL is a new theory of learning that focuses on two-way learning and knowledge building in which the Internet is used to redesign formal, non-formal, and informal education for the Knowledge Age. It highlights three phases of knowledge building through group discourse: idea generating, idea organizing, and intellectual convergence.

In idea generating, there should be brainstorming in which divergent thoughts are gathered for further knowledge building. The second phase focuses on organizing the concept in which the gathered idea is compared and categorized through argument and discussion. And in the final step, consensus and intellectual synthesis happen (Harasim, 2012, as cited in Picciano, 2021).

Harasim (2012) states how to use different approaches and processes in supporting effective learning and change in education. She then emphasized using scenarios to visualize virtual classrooms and online learning, meaning to offer snapshots of a designed online course activity and learners' experience with social and intellectual online interaction. In particular, she rigorously signifies online case studies and games as innovative, collaborative pedagogy promoting exchange.

This theory, also called collaborative, is used for this study to state how PR 3.0, web 3.0, and interactive educational technologies can be synthesized in a virtual space in Afghanistan.

Aim of the Study

The primary aim of this study is to know how to link public relations, interactive technologies, and education to have an effective online higher education in Afghanistan. Thus, the following objectives support the study to meet the set forth goal:

- To study the role of the next generation of public relations (PR 3.0) in online higher education in Afghanistan;
- To analyze the effectiveness of interactive technologies in higher education in online higher education in Afghanistan;
- To scrutinize the 3rd generation (web 3.0) in online higher education in Afghanistan and
- To explore the synergizing of PR 3.0, interactive technologies, and Web 3.0 in online higher education in Afghanistan.

Problem Statement

Online higher education needs new and interactive technologies to engage students in learning. The outcome-based teaching (OBE) and student-centered learning (SCL) highlight the critical roles of students in the learning processes. Therefore, to plan and implement an effective and productive online higher education in Afghanistan, there is the

requirement to synergize three concepts of the next generation of public relations, 3rd generation of web, and interactive technologies in online higher education in Afghanistan. The synergizing of the three disciplines could produce an output that would be a practical, interactive online higher education in Afghanistan on the edge of e-governance in the world. To this end, the study looks to answer the following questions in detail:

Q1: Could PR 3.0 play a significant role in effective online higher education in Afghanistan?

Q2: Could Web 3.0 perform an important function in having an effective online higher education in Afghanistan?

Q3: Could interactive technologies take part in having an effective online higher education in Afghanistan? And

Q4: How to effectively synergize the three disciplines of PR 3.0, Web 3.0, and Interactive Technologies to produce a significant output that would be an effective and engaged online higher education in Afghanistan

Hypothesis

H₀: Synergizing PR 3.0, Web 3.0, and Interactive Technologies does not produce an output that transforms online higher education in Afghanistan.

H₁: synergizing PR 3.0, Web 3.0, and Interactive Technologies produce an output that its outcome will positively affect online higher education in Afghanistan.

Methodology

Synergizing the three disciplines for a single goal to meet future needs with a methodology to serve the study process the best is the expected purpose/outcome of the study. There are two commonly used methodologies: descriptive, sometimes called extrapolative study, and prescriptive, also called normative. The extrapolative study describes the topic objectively, while normative research tries to help people clarify their values and preferences to develop a vision of a desirable future. Thus, the suitable methodology for this study would be prescriptive research.

Universe and Sampling

This study will focus exclusively on three disciplines: the next generation of public relations, 3rd generation of the web, and interactive technologies to find a way to synergize the three for better results in online higher

education in Afghanistan. Thus, this study focuses on the concepts mentioned in the context of Afghanistan's online higher education.

Reliability and Validity

To increase reliability and validity, this study uses the technique of triangulation. Triangulation is an approach to use different ways to study a situation better. In triangulation, the shortage of a method will be compensated by the strength of another method (Kelle & Bernard, 2019; Mertens & HesseBiber, 2012; and Rug, n.d.). Thus, to meet the goal set for reliability and validity, in this study, two techniques of triangulation were used: data and researcher triangulation. The data for this study comes from different sources used for the same purpose. In addition, three independent researchers collected data for the addressing of the problem statement of this study. Then, the data was analyzed and categorized into themes and then interpreted for the provision of answers to the questions of this study.

Data Analysis and Presentation

Introduction

This study will use secondary qualitative data to provide a clear understanding of the three main variables of this study. The collected data will be coded based on relevance to a specific theme. The themes will then be analyzed for the scrutiny of relationships and discrepancies to be tested for the sake of the hypothesis result. Theme analysis is a technique in which the data will be categorized into relevant themes. Then, the relationships, similarities, and discrepancies will be used in the study. In other words, the collected data are divided into different sets based on their relevancies to a specific area in the study. A theme is a key variable in the study.

Theme Analysis is a method for thoroughly identifying, putting in order, and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a dataset. Focusing on meaning across a dataset allows the researcher to understand collective or communal implications and experiences. It is used for accessibility and flexibility (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

Data Analysis

This study focuses on three different areas: PR 3.0, web 3.0, and interactive technologies. This study provides a brief definition of the three disciplines.

Table 1 indicates that all three disciplines focus on two-way communications, interaction, and connectivity.

Table 1: Brief Description of PR 3.0, Web 3.0 and Interactive Technology

PR 3.0	Web 3.0	Interactive Technology
PR 3.0 is an updated version of PR1.0 and PR 2.0 in which the below changes will happen to public relations: PR will play a strategic other than technical roles; PR will play an ideal rather than practical role; The position of PR will be changed from communications executive to the management of communication; PR will play a pioneering role in development; PR will function beyond the organization in a global environment; PR is dependent on virtual space and new media.	“The idea behind the Web was to make publishing possible for anyone; the idea in Web 2.0 was that readers should be writers too” (Andrews, N.D. as cited in Wiles, 2022). “Web 3 is intended to give any participant in the web their autonomous power and control.” Web3 makes peer-to-peer interactions the essence of a new networked commerce and society generation. It retires centralized platforms, servers, and authorities as the key information and value flow managers.	By new technologies, we mean those breakthroughs enabling collaborative and participatory learning processes. There are different technologies, but Jamboard, Zoom, Google Classroom, and Padlet are discussed for this study. These technologies, in addition to allowing students and instructors to interact effectively in a virtual environment, also provide the environment of a physical class in a virtual space. The students and teachers can interact, write, share, save, practice, etc.

Table 2: Distinguishing Characteristics of PR 3.0

Globalized Public Relations	Informational Society	Decentralized Approach	Knowledge-Enhancing Technology
Global awareness as a task for public relations will be added to the trio of organization, audience, and society awareness.	Industrial society will be transformed into an informational society where data will be the main product. New technologies and media will play a key role in informational society.	Centralized public relations will be transformed into a decentralized one in which two-way communication will be the dominant practice in the profession.	Public relations managers should be experts in the discipline, and they must know the international languages to practice public relations effectively in a competitive environment.

Table 3: Historical Development of Webs (Mousavi, 2020)

Web Types	Genesis Practiced	& Characteristics	Impact on Society
Web1.O	1991-2000	One way (i.e., email service)	%15
Web 2.0	2000-2010	Interactive services (e.g., apps)	%50
Web 3.0	2010-2030	Artificial intelligence; Emergence of the learning power of objects High-speed internet Multiple devices connected to the internet	%80
Web4.O	2030-2040	Software in the role of a human assistant	%95
Web5.O	2040-above	The rule of the internet (i.e. E-Governance)	%100

Table 4: Distinguishing Characteristics of Web 3.0

Semantic Web	Artificial Intelligence	3D graphics	Connectivity	Ubiquity
This web enables public relations practitioners to use the technology for accessibility in a virtual environment. The technology can know the meaning of all the words used in the write-up, and it helps in the production, sharing, and connection of the content based on search and analysis (Musavi, 2020).	The software can understand the data and information like humans for more relevant and faster results. The technologies will copy humans in processing and understanding the information.	Most banners of shopping malls, supermarkets, and exhibitions will be 3D graphics designed. This technology is mostly used in online and virtual environments.	Information will be more connected because of the ability of technology to understand the meaning of the information, like humans. Thus, people can have new experiences in using the information.	The technologies are present anywhere in the world. Anyone can benefit from the technologies in a remote village in any country. The meaning of geographical and time as barriers is demolished.

Table 5: Significant Features of Interactive Technologies (Kennewell, 2005).

Editability	Transformability	Feedback
The ability to easily change something that has been produced	The ability to change the form of a representation	The automatic provision of a response to an action by the user

Table 6: Common Significant Distinguishes of PR 3.0, Web 3.0, and Interactive Technologies

New Technology	Interactivity	Connectivity	Ubiquity
The trio highly depends on modern technologies facilitating interactivity, connectivity, and ubiquity.	Web 3.0, PR 3.0, and new technologies can provide interactivity. They provide two-way communication.	The distinctive feature that connects people and distance means nothing anymore.	PR 3.0 highly depends on Web 3.0; the second one is available anywhere. New technologies possess ubiquitous characteristics that make them accessible all over the world.

Data Interpretation and Discussion

PR 3.0 is an updated version of PR1.0 and PR 2.0 in which the below changes will happen to public relations: It will play a strategic, ideal, and pioneer other than technical and practical roles. The position of public relations practitioners will be changed from communications executives to communication managers. This profession will function beyond organization in a global environment and depend on virtual space and new media (Mousavi, 2020). PR 3.0, because of its distinctive characteristics of globalized public relations, informational society, decentralized approach, and knowledge-enhancing technology (Mousavi, 2020), provides unique advantages for different purposes, including education. The basic idea behind the Web was to make publishing possible for everyone while the concept in arrears Web 2.0 was that readers should be writers too” (Andrews, N.D. as cited in Wiles, 2022). Web 3.0 was intended to give any participant in the web their autonomous power and control to create, share, and give feedback. Web 3.0 makes peer-to-peer interactions the essence of a new generation of networked commerce and society. It retires centralized platforms, servers, and authorities as the key managers of information and value flow (Wiles, 2022). The initial distinctions of Web 3.0 consist of the semantic web, artificial intelligence, 3D graphics, connectivity, and ubiquity. Thus, this technology has universalized the availability of communication and education services. Historically, web 1.0 provides one-way services like the free email service by different companies, while Web 2.0 enhances the service by adding

interactivity. Web 3.0 adds artificial intelligence, the learning power of objects, high-speed internet, and diversity in connectivity in the services that, in These services, can be used in the provision of education programs. Web4.O is an outstanding technological breakthrough in which software plays the role of humans, and web5.O will be the rule of the internet, the emergence of e-governance.

By new technologies, we mean those breakthroughs enabling collaborative and participatory learning processes. There are different technologies, but Jamboard, Zoom, Google Classroom, and Padlet are discussed for this study. These technologies, in addition to allowing students and instructors to interact effectively in a virtual environment, also provide the environment of a physical class in a virtual space. The students and teachers can interact, write, share, save, practice, etc. Lewis (1991) states that interactive technologies can instantaneously deliver messages to distant locations at different points in time, indicating asynchronous characteristics of the technologies. The distinguishing features of the new interactive technologies consist of transformability and feedback (Kennewell, 2005). These technologies have the advantages of ubiquity, usability, collaborative content creation, and sharing capability.

PR 3.0, Web 3.0, and Interactive Technologies share some outstanding characteristics that can be synergized to provide effective online higher education in any country. These characteristics include updated technology, interactivity, connectivity, and ubiquity. Also, the trio enjoys having the advantages of usability, collaborative content creation capability, sharing ability, and saving ability. They have the capacity for different types of content, including text, audio, video, multimedia, etc. Thus, these types of content can be amazing in providing online higher education.

Conclusion

The output of this study will be a scholarly article in which the importance, characteristics, and roles of the 3rd generation of public relations, the 3rd generation of the web, and new interactive technologies will be described and explained in detail for better understanding. The study's outcome would be a suggested scheme of online higher education in the country that could relocate education for a brighter future in which a collaborative

system of online higher education could be in place shortly. These can be integral parts of the current Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS) to expand the usage and impact of the current HEMIS. The study's findings indicate that PR 3.0, Web 3.0, and New Interactive Technologies share some significant characteristics advantageous in an online higher education system if they are synergized effectively and productively. They all can process different types of content, including text, audio, video, multimedia, etc. Their precious advantage is that they provide interactive services suitable for effective online higher education. The advanced technologies possess a plus point of ubiquity that makes them available anywhere in the world. They provide a kind of universal service by launching light versions of the online platforms (i.e., zoom, skype, WhatsApp, etc.) that can be available and accessible in developing countries such as Afghanistan. Usability is another plus point: everyone can install the platforms on their mobiles and enjoy using them. The interactive technologies are compatible with the different operating systems of Android, IOS, Windows, Linux, etc.

PR 3.0, in addition to disseminating information, persuasion, and integration, can be an asset in providing service for online education. Web 3.0 allows users to create, share, use, and transfer content autonomously. These are the basic needs for an effectively collaborative online education. New interactive technologies (i.e., Zoom, Jamboard, whiteboard, etc.) provide classes set up in a virtual space where students and teachers can interact, create, save, share, and produce something. They have tools such as Whiteboard and Jamboard for doing and practicing their online assignments and projects collectively and individually.

In a nutshell, the ubiquity and connectivity of Web 3.0 plus globalized, knowledge-enhancing technologies and the decentralized PR 3.0 plus interactive, editable, usable, and available online technologies make an effective system of online higher education in Afghanistan.

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