



## Chapter 19: Writing reports: problem-solution texts

### Task 1

Look at the way voices are expressed in the sample report on culture shock (p. 184).

- Which is the dominant voice?
- Are other voices mainly direct, indirect or external? (See Chapter 11 for an explanation of voices.)
- In what sections of the report are other voices most often heard? Why do you think this is?
- In what sections of the report are other voices least heard? Why do you think this is?

### Task 2

Text 1 is a report by Rogers, S. E. (2016), entitled Bridging the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Digital Divide from *TechTrends* 60: 197-199. This article deals with the digital divide—the difference between people who can access and use information technology and those who cannot. Read the report and complete the following tasks.

- 1 Answer the following questions:
  - What problem is this report examining?
  - Does the report focus on describing the problem or identifying solutions?
- 2 Look at the introduction. Which sentences:
  - Introduce the general topic and provide background that puts the topic in a broader context?
  - Indicate the significance of the topic, explaining in general terms why it is a problem?
  - Define important terms used in the report?
- 3 Look at the way different voices are used in the report.
  - Which is the dominant voice?
  - Are other voices, direct, indirect or external references?
- 4 How are graphics referred to in the text?
- 5 Create a table of contents for the report.
- 6 Write a short executive summary for the report.

## Text I

### **BRIDGING THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY DIGITAL DIVIDE**

Sylvia E. Rogers

<sup>1</sup>Over the last year, AECT's Graduate Student Assembly (GSA) has sponsored several webinars on a variety of topics such as gaming, creativity, medical education, and the digital divide. <sup>2</sup>This report was inspired by one of those webinars titled *Perspectives on the Digital Divide and Global Citizenship* by Heggart and Subromony (2015). <sup>3</sup>It discusses the current state of the digital divide and provides two successful exemplars of programs discussed in the webinar that could narrow the gap as well as a call for continued research on this issue.

#### **An Extremely Brief History of the Digital Divide**

<sup>4</sup>The digital divide is an important issue for social justice in the twenty first century. <sup>5</sup>It was originally defined during the Clinton administration as inequitable access to computers and the Internet. <sup>6</sup>The term was coined by Allan Hammond, then a law professor at New York Law School and Larry Irving, a member of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) in 1995 (see: [http:// www.edutopia.org/digital-generation-divide-connectivity](http://www.edutopia.org/digital-generation-divide-connectivity)). <sup>7</sup>Now twenty years later, the digital divide has evolved beyond access to technology and has expanded to include inequalities in technology skills and how it is used. <sup>8</sup>In essence, there is a gap related to the control of digital production tools and the appropriate context to use those tools. <sup>9</sup>This gap exists for people of color, the economically disadvantaged, and other marginalized groups (Schradié 2011; Subramony 2007, 2014).

#### **Technology is Power**

<sup>10</sup>We live in an age where information and computing technologies (ICT) are considered to be a primary means of production. <sup>11</sup>ICT can be a positive influence for individuals. <sup>12</sup>Skills in technology can be instrumental for individuals to increase their social position and capital. <sup>13</sup>On the other hand, lack of access and skills in ICT can further disenfranchise already marginalized groups (Subramony 2007, 2011, 2014). <sup>14</sup>Therefore, developing skills in technology is vital for students in K-12 and beyond. <sup>15</sup>Educators need to consider the moral, social, and cultural implications of teaching technology to diverse groups of learners.

#### **Production Skills versus Consumption Skills**

<sup>16</sup>In reference to the current digital divide, scholars refer to differences between consumption and production skills in ICT (Hargittai 2003; Schradié 2011; Selwyn. 2004; Subramony 2014). <sup>17</sup>Consumption skills primarily refer to browsing Internet sites, and reading content. <sup>18</sup>Production

skills, however, focus on the creation of new content. <sup>19</sup>For example, individuals with ICT production skills could write a blog, create a database, code a website, or produce video using software (Schradie 2011; Subramony 2014).

### **The Virtuous Spiral and the Vicious Circle**

<sup>20</sup>The Virtuous Spiral (Subramony 2014), as illustrated in Fig. 1, depicts how access to technological means of production (MoP) can lead to increased opportunity to develop skills for the information age. <sup>21</sup>This in turn leads to the increased professional development and the raising of an individual's socioeconomic status.

<sup>22</sup>Unfortunately, access to technology does not always lead to improved technology skills among many marginalized learners. <sup>23</sup>Rather, increased technology use is mediated by a variety of contextual factors, such as gender, cultural traditions, perception of need, and economic class (Schradie 2011; Subramony 2007).

<sup>24</sup>The opposite of the Virtuous Spiral is the Vicious Circle (Subramony 2014). <sup>25</sup>The Vicious Circle, as represented in Fig. 2, illustrates what happens when technology alienates. <sup>26</sup>Traditionally inclusive technology discourse has not always been mainstream (MS). <sup>27</sup>As a result, lack of engagement can occur when educators do not practice inclusive strategies in teaching technology. <sup>28</sup>Alienation can be further exacerbated by a lack of exemplars and role models. <sup>29</sup>Learners could no longer be interested in learning technology because it is not part of their self-identity (Subramony 2014).

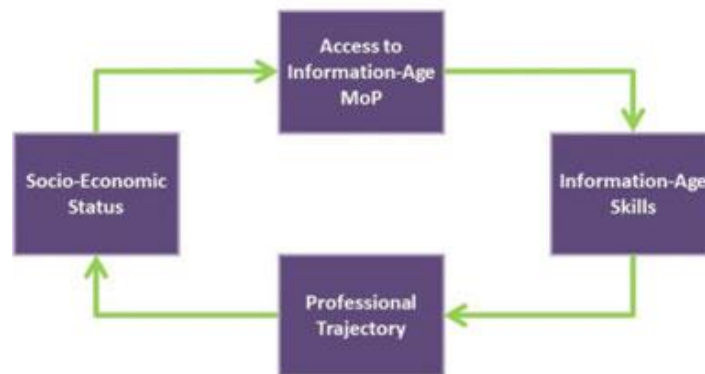
### **Bridging the Gap**

<sup>30</sup>As research continues on inequality in the use of ICT, hopefully more programs will be developed to narrow this gap. <sup>31</sup>Two excellent examples are Australia's *Justice Citizens* civic education program and *Code.org* from the United States.

### **Justice Citizens**

<sup>32</sup>Justice Citizens demonstrates the empowering role of technology. <sup>33</sup>This program was implemented to increase active citizenship for students at a high school in Western Sydney, Australia, where students struggled to be engaged in learning (Heggart 2015). <sup>34</sup>The goals for this program were to give students a choice about what they should learn, be able to participate in a wider community, and have the opportunity to make meaningful decisions (Heggart 2015). <sup>35</sup>The students created short films on community issues and the finished videos were displayed at a neighborhood film festival.

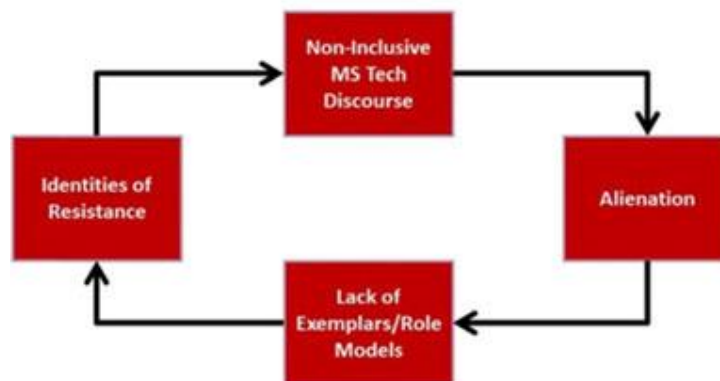
## Virtuous Spiral



**Fig. 1** The virtuous spiral (used with permission of the author)

<sup>36</sup>This program was successful in large part because students were empowered to choose their own projects. <sup>37</sup>Furthermore, because of their increased engagement, they learned a variety of ICT production skills such as blogging, and the shooting and editing of video (Heggart 2015).

## Vicious Circle



**Fig. 2** The vicious circle (used with permission of the author)

### Code.org

<sup>38</sup>Code.org (<https://code.org/>) is a non-profit organization founded in 2013 by brothers, Ali and Hadi Partov, to increase access and promote computer science in classrooms throughout the United States. <sup>39</sup>The founders of Code.org want to increase participation by women and people of color in the computer science fields. <sup>40</sup>In 2013, they sponsored the “Hour of Code” to promote computer science throughout the United States (Code.org 2015).

<sup>41</sup>This has been an effective initiative because of the focus on production skills and an inclusive approach for participation. <sup>42</sup>According to co-founder, Hadi Partov in his 2014 TEDx talk, “Computer science is not just vocational for getting a job, but in this day and age, computer science

is fundamental for any job you want to have for the next 20–30 years” (Partov 2014).

### Call for Research

<sup>43</sup>Research should continue to examine the digital divide as it evolves. <sup>44</sup>For instance, Degennaro and Brown (2009) examined how adolescents of color became engaged in learning technology in an after school web design class by Project HOME in North Philadelphia (<https://projecthome.org/>). <sup>45</sup>They found that history and culture mediated the developing identity of technology users. <sup>46</sup>In order for youth to develop an identity as a technology user, they have to be able to create and learn with technology (Degennaro and Brown 2009). <sup>47</sup>More studies of this type are necessary to see how to narrow this gap.

### Conclusion

<sup>48</sup>Technology has the power to be a force for positive change for all learners, but if non-inclusive strategies are used to teach technology skills, it could facilitate the continued marginalization of economically challenged and culturally diverse learners. <sup>49</sup>Educators need to pay close attention to the characteristics, cultural perspectives, needs, and attitudes of students.

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### Task 3

- 1 Evaluate a report that you have written by asking the following questions:
  - Does the report focus on investigating a problem or on presenting solutions? Is this indicated in the introduction?
  - Are the conclusions and recommendations clearly related to the body of the report?
  - Are the sections of the report clearly labelled?
  - Is the writer's voice clearly distinguished from the voices of others? Are the voices of others clearly labelled?
- 2 Select one section of your report and rewrite it in light of your evaluation.