

Script: Edutaining Our Children
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Lead In: This audio documentary provides a different outlook on the new notion of edutainment. It features different opinions from experts, both for and against, as well as children. Tune in for more information on the Mexican entity, Kidzania, that is giving children the opportunity to learn what the real world is like, while having some fun.

Fade In Music: Akashic Records – “Key to Success” (0:00-0:03)

Now that our lives are digitized, our attention spans are less than the attention spans of goldfish.

Fade In Sound Effect: Technology Interface (0:03)

Fade In Sound Effect: Bubbles underwater (0:05)

The average attention span of a goldfish is nine seconds. And according to research from Microsoft, people’s attention span is eight seconds. As a way of ensuring that our children are learning and grasping as much information as their brain would allow, the notion of edutainment has been introduced.

Fade In Music: Joakim Karud – “Good Old Days” (0:30-0:40)

Fade in Nat Sound: Kidzania (0:02)

Yasmine Nasser (YN): “Kidzania is the first edutainment concept in Egypt and actually worldwide.” (0:05)

That was Yasmine Nasser, a brand manager at Kidzania.

YN: “It is the first concept where we actually enhance the children's learning skills, not only through theoretical stuff or practicing, they do it hands on.” (0:07)

Combining education and entertainment into edutainment allows children to understand how the real world works. At Kidzania, they develop a sense of responsibility from an early age. For example, they learn the value of money.

YN: "They receive a 50 kidzos check." (0:02)

Fade In Sound Effect: Cash Register (0:03)

Kidzos is the fake currency that the children use.

YN: "They then think of their money and think of how they want to spend it. If they want more money, they have to go get a job. They can go get a job at our Coca Cola factory, our Chipsey factory, and then when they have enough money and want to spend it they can go to our culinary school to learn how to cook or they can go firefighting as a free service to the city. They start thinking of what to do so for example if a kid has no more extra kidzos in his hand and he needs to buy something, he's going to go get a job." (0:37)

Engaging children in learning-based activities works on improving their cognitive skills and function. By doing so, the children will be able to be active citizens in their society. At an age, as young as 10 years old, Leila Waleed was able to tell me why she thinks learning-based activities is a good thing.

Fade In Nat Sound: Kidzania (0:05)

LW: "It's a good thing because I learn something new. I really like the police station there because they teach me how to protect myself from anything like a thief or an attacker." (0:15)

LW: "And second of all I really like the beauty salon because I like beauty and cosmetics and makeup. I also like the fashion show because when I grow up I would like to look like a model and model some clothes. At the fashion show I can see what a model's job looks like." (0:30)

Kids like Leila today are learning a bit more while having fun at the same time. But it's not all fun and games. There are certain drawbacks that are keeping the classroom ahead of edutainment. On one hand, there are journals featured in the British journal of educational technology, arguing that edutainment is a harmful additive to the educational diet. Also, psychology professor Jaime Mendoza believes edutainment has yet to work on some of its aspects.

Fade In Music: We Are FM – “City” (0:00-0:08)

JM: “It does not give you the full experience of an activity, or a career, or a job. This is where a teacher becomes really crucial to that is, how do you process that information. For a child, when it becomes beneficial is how the beginner teaches them what to do, because the gap that they had, it’s called a zone of proximal development. It’s a developmental term by Victor Vygotsky. It’s the gap between what I don’t know and my potential to learn. And that potential over here is based on who is my teacher.” (0:35)

On the other hand, Yasmine seems to disagree.

YN: “Well we actually did some research last year. We had some of the children as part of focus groups and asked them these questions. They usually didn’t have any clue what their parents are going through in their jobs but when they actually got a job they understood how difficult it is.” (0:19)

Fade In: Kidzania (0:01)

JM: “There still has to be objectives on what you want to teach these children because children will learn but it may not be what you want them to learn. That’s where it becomes playing. There’s a difference between playing and learning and the objective that you have in them.” (0:17)

Leila agreed with Yasmine as she was also able to distinguish how edutainment will help her in the future.

LY: “By leading me to the job I want to do like be a model. And when I grow up and go to this job I would know what to do and I will be amazing at it.” (0:08)

Well the question now becomes, is it enough to let children learn through edutainment?

JM: “It’s a good start for kids but a real job requires more than just bits and pieces. It’s been happening for a long period of time. Where you have, I’m thinking, the 1920s where you have John Dewey talk about that learning doesn’t have to occur inside of a classroom, it can occur outside of a classroom. And if you can figure out what a child likes, or an adult for that matter, likes then that learning will be greater.” (0:28)

It seems that reaching common grounds is the ultimate solution. Figuring out how to make sure children are learning valuable lessons while they are playing, or doing something else they like.

Fade In Nat Sound: Kidzania (0:08)

This audio documentary was produced by Dania Sheta for the Audio Production course, JRMC 4460, at the American University in Cairo taught by Professor Kim Fox in the Spring semester of 2018. I’d like to thank my interviewees, Yasmine Nasser, Leila Waleed, and Dr. Jaime Mendoza.

Music credits to Key To Success by Akashic Records, City by We Are FM, and Good Old Days by Joakim Karud. Nat Sounds collected by me.