e-G8 Forum Summary

Paris, May 24-25 2011

Rupert Murdoch: EDUCATION: The Last Frontier

Limitless bandwidth. Massive data. Total mobility. Technology continues to accelerate. Will the infrastructure keep pace?

Key Points

*Paradoxically, education is the last sector to take advantage of the opportunities offered by technological progress. Technological solutions exist today -- we need to find ways it can be applied to classrooms everywhere.

*Technology can provide students with the personalized and micro-targeted education necessary to fulfill their potential. The era of one-size-fits-all education, which frustrates the bright kids and leaves the struggling ones behind, is over.

*The key to modern education is software that engages a student's specific learning needs and teach them think for themselves.

*The world's greatest experts should be available to every child, everywhere.

Synopsis

Advances brought about by technology and the Internet are evident everywhere but in education. Schools remain the last holdout from the digital revolution; today's classroom looks almost exactly as it did in the Victorian age. This represents a colossal failure of imagination and an abdication of responsibility to our children. Throwing money at this problem is no solution. In my country, we've doubled spending on primary and secondary education over the last three decades, while test scores remained flat. Some claim the problem is students coming from poverty, broken homes, or immigrant families. This is arrogant, elitist and unacceptable.

The era of one-size-fits-all education, which frustrates the bright kids and leaves the struggling ones behind, is over. Education-specific algorithms can be used to help determine what a student needs to learn. With digital technology we can bring the best educators to children anywhere in world at low

cost. Stephen Hawking explaining principles in physics or Yo Yo Ma teaching harmony could be brought to any classroom for what we now pay to download a song.

An outstanding example of technologically improved education is found in New York City, at an African American charter school in Harlem. The school is located in a neighborhood with all the pathologies normally used to explain away failure. Yet the school tests students, insists parents check homework, and uses technology including the Kindle ebook reader and laptops. Its student test scores are now equal to schools filled with gifted and privileged students.

Technology will not replace the teacher but will take the drudgery out of their responsibilities. The Ikea school in Sweden is supported by a knowledge portal that contains the entire syllabus and other teaching tools. Freed from administrative work, the teacher can give students far more personalized attention.

Software, rather than hardware, is key to innovation in classrooms. Well designed, it teaches concepts while helping students learn for themselves. The more interactive and intimate, the better the student will perform. In two small California schools a textbook publisher is using iPads and education apps to offer guided instruction, instant feedback, and access to hundreds of videos which students use at their own pace.

If we can bring these kinds of advantages to the entire world, we will ensure that a poor child in Manila will have the same opportunities as a rich child in Manhattan.

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