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● A Hyve Event



Bridging the Global Equity in Education Gap

In partnership with



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Foreword

Education is a critical agent for ensuring a sustainable future.

The United Nations' recently published [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\) Progress Report](#) however, flags that just 12% of the SDG targets are on track and calls for governments to focus on critical areas, including tackling the global education crisis and ensuring digital inclusion.¹

As we emerge from COVID-19, the impacts of an unprecedented and exacerbated global education crisis are an enduring reality. We also stand at a pivotal juncture where the exponential development of transformative technologies such as AI and machine learning have the potential to not just recover lost ground, but to supercharge progress towards the UN SDGs and achieve equitable education for all.

As the biggest education and technology community in the world, Bett has a moral obligation to unite its stakeholders, from practitioners to policymakers to EdTech suppliers, to address the global education crisis – an issue that transcends any competition between education states, systems, or commercial entities, and demands collective, immediate action.

In response to calls for pledges from leaders within education and education technology to propose effective solutions to the global education crisis during the September 2022 UN General Assembly, Bett UK 2023, in partnership with Bett Global Inclusion Partner HP, hosted global education influencers and stakeholders as part of a roundtable session. This closed-door event aimed to instigate an outcomes-

focused dialogue on bridging the global equity gap in education.

The roundtable session emphasised the need for a continuously evolving conversation, bigger-picture, purpose-driven collaboration, and crucially, that urgent action is imperative.

As facilitators of the roundtable, it was vital Bett could use the opportunity to learn from some of education and EdTech's most authoritative figures to ensure that Bett itself is actively bridging the global equity gap in education.

Hearing first-hand of the horrific crises displacing children that are happening around the world at this very moment – natural disasters, conflict, and human rights violations as just a few examples – was particularly harrowing. The situations that crisis-affected children and learners are finding themselves in right now are utterly unfathomable. There is no doubt that Bett needs to do more – by actively offering a platform, by acting as a voice for those who need it, and by driving more meaningful conversations, we hope to play a small part.

It is clear that the insights gathered from the roundtable in this white paper reinforce a fundamental principle: the cornerstone of all endeavours to leverage technological advancements for equitable and sustainable education will forever remain the investment in human connection and the dignity of both educators and learners.

– The Bett Team



¹ United Nations. (2023). [Warning Over Half of World Is Being Left Behind, Secretary-General Urges Greater Action to End Extreme Poverty](#), at Sustainable Development Goals Progress Report Launch.

Participants



Carla Rinaldi

President at The Fondazione Reggio Children Centro Loris Malaguzzi, Reggio Emilia

Carla Rinaldi's journey in Reggio Emilia began in 1970 when she started as a Pedagogista, later assuming the role of Pedagogical Director of Municipal Early Childhood Services. Her dedication to Reggio Children led her to become its consultant in 1994 and subsequently the President from 2007 to 2016. In 2011, she was appointed President of Fondazione Reggio Children – Centro Loris Malaguzzi. Her commitment to education extended to academia, where since 1999 she has served as a Professor of “The approach of Reggio Emilia municipal preschools” at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia. Carla's expertise also took her abroad as a Visiting Professor at Webster University and Colorado University in the U.S.A. Her global influence continued with her role as an international partner in the “Thinkers in Residence” project in South Australia since 2012. Her outstanding contributions were recognized in 2015 when she received the LEGO Prize. Since 2019, Carla has taken on the role of Coordinator for the international industrial PhD program “Reggio Childhood Studies,” a collaborative effort between the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia and Fondazione Reggio Children-Centro Loris Malaguzzi. In February 2020, she was invited to participate in the “Workshop on Education: The Global Compact” held at the Vatican's Casina Pio, showcasing her global impact on education.



Charles Radman

Global Head of HP Education, HP Inc.

Charlie Radman is the Head of Worldwide Education at HP, Inc., managing a multi-billion-dollar global education technology business. With over 23 years at HP, 14 years focused on education including his time in HP's legendary Calculator business, Charlie leads a team of experts developing HP's global K12 and Higher Education strategy. Additionally, Charlie is focused on helping HP achieve the corporate sustainability goals of improving education outcomes for 100M people by 2025 and improving Digital Equity for 150M people by 2030 to help realise UN Sustainable Development Goal 4, including working with global partnerships such as Girl Rising, 1 Million Teachers, Global Partnership for Education, and Global Business Coalition for Education to name a few.



Christine Ozden

Global Director, Climate Education, Cambridge University Press & Assessment

Christine Ozden is an international education executive who has lived and worked in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. Having spent the mainstay of her career in general management roles for global organisations providing educational products and services to students, teachers, school leaders, and ministries of education, Christine was recently appointed as the first ever Global Director for Climate Education at Cambridge University Press & Assessment. She is focused on the climate-related contexts, challenges, and opportunities for all of us within the world of education. More than ever, Christine believes in the importance of international collaboration, building great partnerships, and the need for sustainability in all we do.



Cidgem Ertem

General Manager – Education, Intel Corporation, United States

Cidgem Ertem is the General Manager for Education in Intel's Sales and Marketing Group and Chair for the Education Center of Excellence across Intel. She leads a global team for building sales strategy and developing and deploying value-added tools, solutions, and programs for Intel. She works closely with partners worldwide to drive digital transformation in the education vertical. Her passion area is creating awareness in skill building for students to prepare them to be successful in the disruption of the fourth Industrial Revolution and help them achieve their full potential.



Ernest Gavor

Co-Founder and Director from Ghana Society for Education Technology

Ernest Gavor is a social entrepreneur and technology innovator with a passion for using digital technology to improve education in Africa. He is the co-founder and Director of Innovation of Ghana Society for Education Technology (GSET), an accredited CPD provider for educators in Ghana. GSET is leading the integration of digital technology in teaching & learning at scale in Ghana with the Government and other partners. Ernest is a digital technology and EdTech thought leader, investor, and expert on the Africa market. He has deep knowledge of the startup and small business ecosystem of Africa and engages regularly as a consultant, conference speaker, and startup coach for universities and startups. He is also the lead for the Africa Zone for the Global EdTech Startup Awards (GESAWARDS) and is involved with multiple incubator and accelerator programmes in Africa.



Fatimah Ogunjimi

Director of Black Belts at 1 Million Teachers

Fatimah Ogunjimi works as a project officer for GPE/ UNICEF, 1 Million Teachers, and is the director of Black Belts. Fatimah is an educational consultant with experience in Nigeria and the United Kingdom. She is an experienced class teacher with a demonstrated history of working in the education management industry. Fatimah is skilled in English coordination, technology needs analysis, Primary Education, and Classroom Management.



Fernando Valenzuela Migoya

Founding Partner, Global Impact EdTech Alliance, and Founder, Edlatam Alliance

Fernando Valenzuela Migoya is recognised as one of Latin America’s most influential leaders in education technology. Named global visionary of the year by Edtech Digest 2022, Fernando actively drives disruptive changes, with direct influence over hundreds of institutions and thousands of solutions, establishing a mindset and framework of action to create social value for over 25 countries. He is a trilingual senior executive, impact investor, entrepreneur, consultant, and speaker, with Global multi-industry and multi-cultural capabilities and an expert in Latin America and Hispanic markets.



Professor Dr Ger Graus OBE

Global Education Advisor, Board Director, Advisory Board & Chair Member

Professor Dr Ger Graus OBE is a renowned figure in the field of education. He was KidZania’s first Global Education Director and founding CEO of the Children’s University. In 2019, Ger became a Visiting Professor at the National Research University, Moscow, Russia. He globally advises Tata Consultancy Services, India, chairs the Advisory Boards at Kabuni, Let’s Localise and My Global Bridge, UK, and Twin Science, Turkey. Ger moved to the United Kingdom in 1983 where he began his teaching career, later becoming a Senior Inspector, and Education Director. Ger is a member of Bett’s Global Education Council; DIDAC India’s Advisory Board; chairs the Beaconhouse School System’s Advisory Board, Pakistan; advises the Fondazione Reggio Children, Italy; and was invited to help shape the future of education in Dubai as a member of the Dubai Future Councils. In the 2014 Queen’s Birthday Honours List Ger Graus was made an Honorary Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (OBE) for services to children. In his book ‘Natural Born Learners’, Alex Beard says: “In learning terms, Ger Graus is Jean-Jacques Rousseau meets Willy Wonka.”



Jeffrey Jian Xu

Sr Education Specialist –
Education Technology,
Asian Development Bank,
Philippines

Mr Xu serves in the ADB education sector group. As a member of the expert pool in the area of Education Technology, Jeffrey covers ADB’s engagement in education-related projects with DMCs, particularly using ICT and education technology to promote education equity and improve efficiency and efficacy in teaching and learning. Jeffrey is an information technology professional with over 22 years of experience enabling business strategies through effective technology solutions, across multiple industries including education, real estate, financial services, health care, bio-pharmaceutical, and telecom. Prior to joining ADB Jeffrey was the CTO of one of the largest education technology companies in the world transforming the education industry using digital technology and led several educational support projects to rural poverty provinces to solve educational inequity in China. Jeffrey worked in the US for 12 years first with Hughes Network Systems as a software engineer, and then with Freddie Mac as IT Director. Jeffrey then spent the last ten years in China working as CIO of Novartis Greater China Region, CIO of CapitaLand China, and CTO of New Oriental Education Technology Group.



John Vamvakitis

Managing Director, Google
for Education, Google

John Vamvakitis is a senior leader with broad experience across content, technology, and management consulting, possessing a deep understanding of general sales & marketing management, strategic planning, and new concept development. John has over thirty years of multi-functional executive experience ranging from venture-funded start-ups to Google, The Walt Disney Co., and KPMG.



Jonathan Slater

Council Member, The
Foundation for Education
Development, United Kingdom

Jonathan Slater was the Permanent Secretary of the Department for Education from 2016-2020, serving Nicky Morgan, Justine Greening, Damian Hinds, and Gavin Williamson. His career started in operational research, before Jonathan moved into local government, first at Newham and then 10 years in Islington, where he ended up as Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Education. In 2001 Jonathan joined the civil service, working at first in the Office of Public Service Reform within the Cabinet Office, helping Tony Blair to develop his reform agenda. After a spell in the Prime Minister’s Delivery Unit, Jonathan moved to the Home Office, as Director of Performance and Improvement for Prisons and Probation. Jonathan was subsequently appointed Chief Executive of the Office for Criminal Justice Reform, reporting jointly to the Home Secretary, Justice Secretary, and Attorney General. He was then promoted to the new post of Director General for Transforming Justice, under first Jack Straw and then – after the 2010 election – Ken Clarke. In 2011 Jonathan was asked to oversee the transformation of the Ministry of Defence (the ‘Levene review’). Following the completion of this work, Jonathan moved back to the Cabinet Office as Head of the Economic and Domestic Secretariat in 2015, before his final promotion to DfE Permanent Secretary. Alongside this role Jonathan was the civil service LGBT+ champion and head of the policy profession.



Kirsty McFaul

Senior Education Officer for
Education Scotland

Kirsty McFaul is Senior Education Officer for Technologies at Education Scotland. She has worked for Education Scotland since 2012 and led the refresh to the technologies curriculum with a focus on Digital Literacy and Computing Science in 2016/2017 and supported the development of the Scottish Government’s Digital Learning and Teaching strategy published in 2016.



Kristina Ishmael

Deputy Director, U.S.
Department of Education
Office of Educational
Technology, United States

Kristina Ishmael is an educator, learner, advocate, and agent of change. As the leader of the Office of Educational Technology, Ishmael executes the office mission of developing national edtech policy that enables everywhere, all-the-time learning and supports digital equity and opportunity. Ishmael most recently worked as a Sr Research Fellow at New America working at the intersection of open education, digital equity, and culturally responsive and sustaining education. She previously led the national #GoOpen initiative and served the state of Nebraska as the Digital Learning Specialist. Ishmael started her education career as an early childhood and elementary teacher to emerging bilingual learners in Omaha, Nebraska.



Madina Tynybayeva

President, National Academy
of Education, Kazakhstan MoE

Madina Tynybayeva is the President of Kazakhstan's Y. Altynsarin National Academy of Education, with a background in Teaching English as a foreign language. She holds an MSc. in Educational Science and Technology from the University of Twente, Netherlands, earned through a Bolashak international scholarship, and a Ph.D. in Education from Nazarbayev University. Currently, she's pursuing a Diploma in Organizational Leadership at Oxford University as a Bolashak fellow. Over nearly two decades, she has been instrumental in advancing evidence-based methods for monitoring learning outcomes and teacher development. She has taught, conducted research, and held leadership roles in various academic institutions. Madina is an active participant and moderator in educational conferences, with published work in peer-reviewed journals. She's also served on journal boards and received multiple awards for her significant contributions to secondary education.



Nasser Al-Faqih

Chief of Strategic Partnerships,
Education Cannot Wait (ECW)

Education Cannot Wait (ECW) is the United Nations global fund for education in emergencies and protracted crises. We support and protect holistic learning outcomes – so no one is left behind. ECW works through the multilateral system to both increase the speed of responses in crises and connect immediate relief and longer-term interventions through multi-year programming. ECW works in close partnership with governments, public and private donors, UN agencies, civil society organisations, and other humanitarian and development aid actors to increase efficiencies and end siloed responses.



Noura Merhabi

Director of Partnerships,
MENA EdTech Alliance

Noura is a seasoned education technology expert and trainer, with extensive experience in digital transformation strategies. She is Vice President of International Partnerships at the Middle East and North Africa Alliance for Education Technology (MENA EDTECH ALLIANCE) and a Microsoft and Edmodo Certified Trainer. Noura has served in various educational technology and international curriculum consultancy positions and has held key positions in the private sector, as well as in international organisations such as the International Baccalaureate and the Lebanese Creative Association. She is a founding member of the EdTech Syndicate in Lebanon and a board member of the Arab Lebanese Council for Governance. She is also a consultant at the International Institute for Arab Renewal and the Activities and Communications Officer for the Arab Internet and Communications Union – League of Arab States (ARISPA). Noura is known for her contributions to spreading awareness about the importance of digital transformation and good governance through seminars, interviews, and successful training programs.



Priyanka Sethi

Head of Sales, Communication, Media, Education and Information Services, Tata Consultancy Services

Priyanka Sethi is a strategic leader with over 20 years of international experience across strategy, sales, marketing, and consulting. Priyanka has spent a significant part of her career within the education, telecom, media (new media, publishing, broadcasting, agencies), and information services sectors. Technology changes rapidly and Priyanka's focus has been to lean in and embrace that evolving digital landscape and create innovative, path-breaking, and pioneering business driving solutions for our clients, alongside extremely talented and driven teams. Her core strength and passion lies in connecting with people. Priyanka believes that people enrich our lives, and her learning is deeply indebted to the wonderful connections she has made over the years; be it in the boardrooms of multinationals or the classrooms with underprivileged children. She is passionate about encouraging STE(A)M careers within the youth and particularly for girls. Sustainability and wildlife conservation are also close to Priyanka's heart, and it gives her a huge sense of purpose to help and volunteer in different capacities.



Rabih Baalbaki

President, EdTech Syndicate in Lebanon

Mr Rabih Baalbaki is a professor, expert, and international trainer in Digital Transformation, and serves as President of LAITP, the Lebanese Association for IT Professionals. EdTech and Innovation sector coordinator at DT Network. He is President and CEO ACT College and has over 22 years of progressive consultancy and leadership expertise in professional ICT training management with demonstrated initiative creativity, success, and sustainability projects.



Rizma Butt

Co-Founder and Chief Operating Officer, 1 Million Teachers

Rizma's unwavering passion for human capacity development and community upliftment drove her to co-found 1 Million Teachers (IMT), an organisation focused on empowering educators and providing inclusive education globally. As the COO of IMT and IMT Cares, Rizma is actively involved in initiatives aimed at transforming the lives of underprivileged communities. She also brings valuable experience from her role as the Chief Online Brand Manager at the successful Pakistani fashion brand 'Iznik'. Furthermore, Rizma's commitment to education and community development extends to her roles as an Adjunct Professor at Queen's University and St. Lawrence College, where she imparts her knowledge and expertise to aspiring minds. She has also collaborated with small non-governmental organisations to provide free education to underprivileged children in Pakistan. Her work at the Smith School of Business as a Coach showcases her passion for empowering individuals to realise the potential of their own minds in driving positive change. As a social entrepreneur, Rizma thrives on tackling significant challenges with cross-functional and cross-continental teams and stakeholders. She has collaborated with renowned partners like HP, Girl Rising, UNESCO, and UNICEF to design and implement creative solutions that address social challenges. Currently, Rizma serves as a mentor and Operations Manager for the MSII SDG Initiative, a groundbreaking movement initiated by His Highness Muhammad Sanusi II to address the educational crisis in sub-Saharan Africa. The MSII SDG Initiative aims to promote Quality Education (SDG 4) and Gender Equality (SDG 5) by empowering grassroots teacher-changemakers. Rizma's unwavering dedication and innovative approach make her an inspiring force in the pursuit of transforming educational landscapes in Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia.



Sarah Richards

Director of Product
Marketing, SMART
Technologies

Passionate about advancing education through technology, Sarah Richards has dedicated her career to empowering educators and leaders through her many commercial roles at SMART Technologies. She led the creation of the SMART EdTech Assessment Tool, a resource that helps leaders evaluate and facilitate their integration of technology in teaching and learning. This project introduced a structured framework for evaluation, and since 2017 has helped over 6,500 education leaders make more informed decisions about the adoption and implementation of technology to enhance teaching practices and improve outcomes. Currently the Director of Marketing at SMART, Sarah has focused her career on understanding and responding to the needs of educators, helping connect them, and enabling them to discover new ways to use technology to impact the lives of students.



Sharon Tao

Education Director/Team
Leader, Girls' Education
Challenge (GEC) Fund Manager

Dr Sharon Tao is Education Director/Team leader of the FCDO flagship programme, the Girls' Education Challenge, a 12-year £855m global fund comprising 41 projects across 17 countries, aiming to improve educational opportunities for the world's most marginalised girls. Leading this programme has been informed by extensive experience of implementing complex, large-scale, FCDO bilateral education programmes in Uganda, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Tanzania, Nigeria, India, and the Eastern Caribbean. Work on systems strengthening, intervention/programme design and policy development within these programmes has been underpinned by PhD research and engagement with a wide evidence base; as well as experience in teaching classes of 100+ students in government schools in Tanzania and Rwanda. Sharon has an in-depth understanding of and experience in nurturing government relationships, managing teams/partners, and overseeing budgets/work planning, which has resulted in the ability to shape and deliver successful and innovative gender responsive education programmes.



Stijn De Lameillieure

Head Private Sector and
Foundations, Global
Partnership for Education
(GPE)

Stijn De Lameillieure is currently leading GPE's engagement with private foundations at the GPE Secretariat. Stijn has extensive experience of international cooperation, education, and poverty reduction. He is specialised in education in fragile contexts. Prior to joining GPE, he worked as an education advisor and program manager at the European Commission, UNICEF, UNDP, UN-Habitat, Save the Children and has worked with the United Nations in Angola, Ecuador, and Brazil. The Global Partnership for Education supports 65 developing countries to ensure that every child receives a quality basic education, prioritising the poorest, the most vulnerable, and those living in fragile and conflict-affected countries.

Executive Summary

Education is a global common good and the foundation of just, equal, inclusive, and peaceful societies. Access to education that develops the whole person and fosters respect and peace is a fundamental human right (Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), 1948).

So important is this right, and so far are we from securing this for all, that 193 countries have signed up to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with SDG4 being the promise of ‘inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all.’ Despite these commitments, we find ourselves in the midst of a global learning crisis — a crisis that was significantly exacerbated by the mass closure of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. This crisis demands immediate action to prevent it from becoming a generational catastrophe. Ensuring we have quality, inclusive, and equitable education across all regions of the world is the single most important solution to tackle the biggest global challenges we face.

According to UNESCO, over 260 million children – and counting – cannot access education due to geographical, sociocultural, and political reasons, including conflict, natural disasters, gender-based barriers, and political turmoil.² Lack of access to education hits the most vulnerable hardest – girls and women, disabled people, and those from lower-income families and rural communities, for example, are at a significantly greater risk of becoming further marginalised.

The education that many can access is not necessarily fit for purpose, is based on archaic principles and pedagogies, and does not address the need for our learners to be digitally literate, climate aware, and equipped with forward-facing skills required to contribute to changing economies.

With the enormous scale of the problem in mind, Bett convened a Global leadership roundtable during the Bett Show in London in March 2023. Global leaders from across five continents and with experience of education policy, practice, and leadership in different contexts, including working with communities in some of the most underserved and disrupted parts of the world, came together to share experiences, define problems, explore solutions, and challenge current approaches to tackling some of the most intractable issues facing education today. The dialogue aimed to propose tangible actions towards transforming education systems and approaches – including how to harness technology – to enable millions more children and young people to access inclusive, equitable, and quality education, contributing to healthier, flourishing communities.

Based on the roundtable discussions, we propose three key recommendations for closing the global equity gap in education:

1. Change Must Happen Now: Education needs to adapt faster to our fast-paced and fast-changing world.

- a.** Our outdated education systems are no longer fit for purpose.

The world is changing faster than humans have seen before. Disruption at a global scale including climate change, biodiversity loss, and digital transformation is changing the face of the earth and how humans interact with it. Education needs to recognise the different environment it now exists within and adapt to it. Outcomes for education systems need to align more closely with the UN’s SDGs, and curricula need to be more centred on the needs of the child, their communities, and societies. Skills and experiences need to be further prioritised in education if we are to meet the needs of the future.

- b.** Education needs to flex to meet the needs of learners in their different contexts and decide how the full spectrum of technology can supercharge these efforts.

Education systems need to be able to respond to crises. Not just ensure that there are no gaps in learning, but also to maintain quality, personalised education for all learners across all settings. The COVID-19 pandemic changed how learners accessed and engaged with education, with education institutions and systems around the world rushing to acquire remote learning solutions. During this period, we learned so much about the possibilities and limitations of EdTech to support learning. Unfortunately, we also learned that disparities in provision of and access to devices, infrastructure, and quality programmes meant that the equity gap widened during this period, in both the global north and global south.

² UNESCO Institute for Statistics. (2023). [Out-of-School Children and Youth](#).



- c. The education gap is a global issue that requires local solutions.

Sharing best practice is essential when solving any issue, and all those seeking to create meaningful change know that, while blueprints are helpful, off-the-shelf practices rarely have the same impact from one setting to the next. Therefore, we must ensure that we work with and through communities, tailoring solutions to suit local needs, and involve all sectors concerned to help whole communities prosper.

2. Learning Communities Deserve More Dignity: We must honour teachers' and learners' dignity to help unlock solutions.

- a. Teachers deserve more dignity than they are given.

Teachers are not always valued as highly as they should be around the world. We must celebrate and raise the profile of the teachers and invest in their professional development to ensure fulfilling, purposeful careers. With so many children in low- and middle-income countries being taught by unqualified teachers, we must prioritise teacher capacity-building and training them with sound pedagogy. Teachers are learning communities' most valuable resource and are experts in understanding the individual needs of their learners in specific contexts. We must recognise and harness this expertise by involving them in creating, implementing, and reviewing innovative educational solutions.

- b. Learners – particularly children – have the ideas and experience to unlock better education solutions, and we should seek to co-create with them.

Children are frequently overlooked as voices to inform educational planning and support, as they are not active economically or politically. Yet, they often have the energy, ideas, unique perspective, and lived experience needed to help solve issues that affect us all. Societies around the world need to give children the respect and dignity they deserve, giving education, play, and childhood development and experiences the international priority it duly needs. Within this context, the celebration of

diversity comes hand in hand, and we must ensure that vulnerable individuals within the student population are supported to bring their creative ideas to the table. We believe that creating solutions with the learners at their core requires co-creation with the learners themselves, which has the potential to unlock solutions to the global learning crisis.

3. Commit to Long-Term Partnerships: Long-term collaborative thinking is needed to target action effectively.

- a. Collaborations which involve a synthesis of learner, teacher, parent, elected representatives, academics, employers, and more will help transform education systems.

We must look to where this has been effective in other countries like Singapore to develop a long-term blueprint. We will need to consider the tension between long-term collaborative endeavours and shorter-term democratic cycles and how these can impact power dynamics.

- b. Long-term funding is required, focusing on using education to deliver the other sustainable development goals.

There is a decreasing trend in foreign aid allocated to education, and the private sector needs to play more of a part in ensuring funding goes beyond short political cycles. The design and delivery of long-term funding for education should also be a multi-stakeholder collaboration, including young people. With the EdTech industry one of the fastest growing sectors,³ governments must be supported to procure based on the evidence of what works, and the specific needs of their communities. A robust ethics framework around EdTech is necessary.

Making progress on a global scale requires a long-term collaborative effort, resilience, adaptability, and the sheer will to succeed. This roundtable is only the first in a series of conversations that we want to have, and the message that came through most strongly for all roundtable participants is the need for more voices across the global education ecosystem to help shape the next phase of this conversation – particularly those of teachers and learners.

³ HolonIQ. (2021). [Education Technology in 10 Charts](#).

Education needs to adapt faster to our fast-paced and fast-changing world.

We are in the midst of an increasing global learning crisis.

According to UNESCO, over 260 million children are excluded from accessing education every year, which equates to one in ten children denied the right to education – and this is before we even begin to consider the ‘quality’ of education accessed. An alarming 160 million children find themselves engaged in various forms of labour, often under indentured conditions, which significantly obstructs their access to education. Furthermore, a distressing statistic reveals that every year, over 14 million girls under the age of 18 are forced into early marriages and motherhood, further compounding the barriers to their education. There are an estimated 240 million children with disabilities worldwide, who are often an afterthought, at best, in policy making, and are the most likely to be out of school due to a multitude of barriers, such as cultural stigma, prejudice, and lack of accessibility within both physical and remote learning environments.⁴

Before the pandemic, the world was already battling a learning crisis. Over 250 million children of primary and secondary school age were out of school, and of those lucky enough to be attending school in middle- and lower-income countries, over half of them were unable to read and understand a simple text by the age of 10.⁵ In Sub-Saharan Africa, this figure rose to almost 90%. Looking ahead, and exacerbating this challenge, we are experiencing a rapidly expanding population. The global population between six and 11 years of age is expected to reach an all-time high of 820 million in 2023, with the fastest growth in regions facing the most significant education challenges like Angola, Uganda, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.⁶

Impoverished and marginalised communities continue to be hit the hardest in both low-income and more economically developed countries. For example, in low-income countries, over one-third of 12-14-year-olds and 15-17-year-olds remain out of school. In Sub-Saharan Africa, UNESCO estimates that 98 million children and young people are out of school, and this population continues to grow.

Despite being the world’s fifth-largest economy, inequalities abound in the United Kingdom, which ranks 23rd globally

in terms of equality in primary schools.⁷ In the United States, there are significant disparities in access to quality education due to socio-economic, race, disability, and even gender barriers.⁸ Across the globe, indigenous communities are amongst the worst served by education systems. The education systems do not adequately acknowledge the rich and varied cultures of indigenous peoples. There is a shortage of educators proficient in their languages, and many of their schools are deficient in essential resources. Indigenous peoples do not fully enjoy the universal right to education, and a gap between indigenous peoples and the rest of the population remains critical, worldwide.⁹

Alongside these systemic and cultural shortcomings and barriers to accessing education, conflict, natural disasters, and other crises massively impact children and education. The number of countries experiencing violent conflict is the highest it has been in the last 30 years.¹⁰ According to the United Nations High Commissioner For Refugees (UNHCR), approximately 100 million people, 30 million of these children, were forcibly displaced by conflicts, natural disasters, and political and economic crises, both within and across borders in 2022.¹¹ Nearly half of school-age refugee children are out of school.¹² This is problematic on two counts: the loss of education, and the safe space that schools provide in communities. Schools protect children from the physical dangers around them – including abuse, exploitation, trafficking, radicalisation, and forced conscription into armed groups. They often provide critical health and wellbeing roles ensuring that children are fed and hydrated, sometimes distributing medical and hygiene products. Schools also offer psychosocial support, giving children stability and structure to help them cope with the trauma they experience every day.¹³

Educational systems were not designed with resilience to such crises in mind, and policymakers and other experts were well aware of this before the pandemic. The Global Programme for Safer Schools, initiated by the World Bank in 2014, aimed to conduct research and promote the integration of risk reduction into education investments.¹⁴

⁴ UNICEF. (2023). [Inclusive education](#).

⁵ World Bank. (2019). [Ending Learning Poverty: What will it take?](#)

⁶ World Economic Forum. (2018). [The world’s fastest-growing populations are in the Middle East and Africa. Here’s why](#).

⁷ UNICEF. (2018). [An Unfair Start: Inequality in children’s education in rich countries](#).

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ United Nations. (2019). [Department of Economic and Social Affairs: Education for Indigenous Peoples](#).

¹⁰ UNICEF. (2023). [Children Under Attack](#).

¹¹ UNICEF. (2023). [Education in emergencies](#).

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ World Bank. (2023). [Global Program for Safer Schools \(GPSS\): About us](#).



But when COVID-19 hit, the global education community was not prepared. The pandemic served to exacerbate this global learning crisis, deepening already entrenched inequalities within countries, and across countries. Those hardest hit were children with disabilities, those from low-income households, and girls. These groups were less likely to access remote learning due to limited availability of electricity, connectivity issues, access to devices, accessible technologies as well as discrimination.¹⁵

The pandemic and school closures threatened children's health and safety, with a significant rise in both domestic violence and child labour bearing substantial impacts on student learning. In low-and middle-income countries, the share of children unable to read and comprehend a simple text by age 10, already at 50% pre-pandemic, could reach 70%, largely as a result of the long school closures and the relative ineffectiveness of remote learning.¹⁶

While the gendered impact of school closures on learning is still emerging, initial evidence points to larger learning losses among girls, including in South Africa and Mexico.¹⁷ Over

130 million young women around the world are not currently enrolled in school,¹⁸ and one in three girls in developing countries marry before age 18, leading to an abrupt end to their education.¹⁹

“Whilst issues such as disability or crisis affect boys as well as girls, these issues are compounded and multiplied when they’re experienced by girls.”

– Sharon Tao, Girls’ Education Challenge

The impact on this generation of learners is likely to be felt long into the future. The UN projects that this generation of children could lose a combined total of 17 trillion USD in lifetime earnings in present value.²⁰

At present, there are not enough quality teachers to give every learner the right to an education.

As stated in the opening sentence of Mick Waters’s and Sir Tim Brighouse’s book *About Our Schools*: “The teacher is the most important influence in the schooling system.”²¹ Research shows that the quality of teachers is a major determinant of children’s learning and wellbeing. Going from a poor-performing teacher to a great teacher can increase student learning by multiple years of schooling. Global research by Professor Simon Burgess at the Universities of Bristol and IZA, Germany concludes that “Teacher effectiveness is the most important component of the education process within schools for pupil attainment.”²² The research also indicates that teacher effectiveness determines long-term outcomes

for their students, such as earnings. These findings are reflected in the UN’s Sustainable Development Goal 4, which specifically calls on nations, educational nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), and donors to improve and increase the recruitment and training of teachers. Attracting early-career, committed, and skilful teachers into the profession is a challenge, not least in the regions which need it most. The importance of the teacher-learner relationship in positive education outcomes is further highlighted in the 2023 Global Education Monitoring Report.²³ Technology has a key role to play in support of that impactful relationship, rather than being seen as something to replace it.

¹⁵ UNICEF. (2023). [Education in emergencies](#).

¹⁶ World Bank. (2021). [The State of the Global Education Crisis: A Path to Recovery](#).

¹⁷ UNESCO. (2021). [Learning losses from COVID-19 school closures could impoverish a whole generation](#).

¹⁸ UNICEF. (2023). [Girls’ education](#).

¹⁹ United Nations Population Fund. (2023). [Child marriage](#).

²⁰ United Nations. (2015). [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: Quality Education](#).

²¹ Brighouse, T., & Waters, M. (2021). *About Our Schools*. Crown House Publishing, p. 3.

²² IZE World of Labor. (2019). [Understanding teacher effectiveness to raise pupil attainment](#).

²³ Global Education Monitoring Report. (2023). [Technology in Education: A tool on whose terms?](#)



Globally, we need 69 million additional trained teachers to be able to deliver universal basic education by 2030. In sub-Saharan Africa, only 64% of primary and 50% of secondary school teachers are trained which is a declining trend over the past decade. It is a similar picture in South Asia where 72% of primary teachers were trained compared to 78% in previous years.²⁴ Moreover, these teachers often work in some of the most challenging contexts, such as overcrowded classrooms, scarcity of resources, challenging infrastructures, poor pay, and overburdened workload.

In the Central African Republic (CAR), classes can be as large as 83 pupils per class, while in Cameroon, there are often 12 students sharing one book, and in Chad, 75% of schools lack water, sanitation, or electricity.²⁵ In these countries, high teacher absence rates result in receiving an average of just 2 hours and 50 minutes of teaching per day, and over 80% of grade four teachers have not reached the minimum level of mastery of the curriculum. Similar quality issues have been reported in studies conducted in Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, Lao PDR, Peru, and Tanzania, all showing variations in different settings.²⁶

None of this is the fault of the teachers, but rather the result of poor system-level policies. The Education International Research report on the status of teachers (2021) concluded that teacher pay is unattractive, conditions across the board are deteriorating, investment into infrastructures for teaching and learning is inadequate, workload has intensified, short-term contracts are causing massive attrition, and that Continuous Professional Development is poor quality and often irrelevant.²⁷

This all adds up to a great injustice. The children whom society is failing the most are the ones who need an education the most to succeed and thrive. Education can be a source of stability, comfort, and hope for the millions who are grappling with challenges and loss.

Education is an essential component of human flourishing. A good quality education is the cornerstone of increased employment, earnings, good health, and poverty reduction. Our societies also benefit from an educated population – strengthening institutions, fostering social cohesion and spurring much needed innovation to help humanity solve the challenges of our time.²⁸

We have a moral duty to close this widening global equity gap in education, and the time to act is now.

²⁴ UNESCO. (2019). [World Teachers' Day 2019 Fact Sheet](#).

²⁵ UNESCO Institute for Statistics. (2023). [Out-of-School Children and Youth](#).

²⁶ World Bank. (2023). [Teachers](#).

²⁷ Education International. (2021). [New global report points to overworked, underpaid, and undervalued teaching profession](#).

²⁸ World Bank. (2018). [LEARNING to Realize Education's Promise](#).

Our current education systems are outdated and are no longer fit for purpose.

As the world around us continues to change, at increasingly accelerated rates, so too have the skills, knowledge, attitudes and experiences needed to thrive in it. Technology increasingly touches every part of our lives, not least in the world of work.

Young people leaving education were already facing historic unemployment levels prior to the pandemic. At present, our 1.3 billion young people are faced with an increasingly difficult employment market due to the effects of COVID-19 and the rise of global automation and machine-learning. International Labour Organisation research uncovered that almost 25% of 18–24-year-olds stopped working during the pandemic, and many others had their hours and incomes significantly reduced.²⁹ For a multitude of reasons, these out-of-work young people are struggling to secure stable employment. Jobs historically held by the young are at higher risk of being automated, and at an accelerating pace.³⁰

Coupled with this, across sectors and industries across the globe, employers are struggling to recruit talent. As jobs evolve and demand new skills, hiring managers are focusing less on higher-level qualifications, and more on finding talent whose current skills match the role.³¹ There is a need for education to catch up with industry in ensuring that young people are equipped with the personal and technical skills required for an evolving labour market.

Anticipating the Artificial Intelligence revolution, the World Economic Forum (WEF) identified six skills that cannot be replicated by AI:

- Non-verbal communication
- Deep empathy
- Growth management
- Meta-cognition
- Collective intelligence management
- New ideation.³²

The WEF estimated that we will need to reskill more than one billion people by 2023.³³ Our education systems are no longer meeting the societal, environmental, or economical needs of our time. In our rapidly changing world, education must also evolve to help ensure that our future as a species, and as protectors of life on planet Earth, continues to flourish.

As the fourth industrial revolution builds pace, it is essential to recognise that technologies and humans will co-exist, and these technologies will become an integral part of our lives shaping how we shop, learn, travel, are entertained, and even how we vote, how we think, and what we believe about who we are. We must not compromise our humanity or our dignity as this future starts to come into focus.

“We are all refugees in the technologies of the future.”

– Carla Rinaldi, President at The Fondazione Reggio Children Centro Loris Malaguzzi, Reggio Emilia

Education needs to flex to meet the needs of learners in their different contexts, and decide how the full spectrum of technology can supercharge these efforts.

Many national education systems around the world were developed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. As new technological advances of the 20th century transformed our world, with the dawn of TV and radio for example, education flexed with it. However, 2020 marked a dramatically different childhood experience than had been seen in any previous generations. At the height of the pandemic, UNICEF reported that one in three of the world’s children was cut off from education due to inaccessibility to remote learning methods.³⁴

In the face of mass school closures, organisations and education systems across the world mobilised to respond to the potential for a huge loss of learning. The global pandemic accelerated how technology was used in education, and in this emergency situation the technology drove the pedagogy out of necessity, and not the other way around. Whilst there was much to celebrate in this time, we should be cautious about taking evidence from the pandemic, as the solutions created were generally rapid-response, and may not necessarily be the right approaches in the longer-term.

²⁹ International Labor Organization. (2020). [Youth and COVID-19: Impacts of jobs, education, rights and mental well-being.](#)

³⁰ International Labor Organization. (2020). [Global Employment Trends.](#)

³¹ World Economic Forum. (2020). [We need a global reskilling revolution – here’s why.](#)

³² World Economic Forum. (2020). [These 6 skills cannot be replicated by artificial intelligence.](#)

³³ World Economic Forum. (2020). [We need a global reskilling revolution – here’s why.](#)

³⁴ UNICEF. (2020). [COVID-19: Are children able to continue learning during school closures?](#)

EdTech has the potential to level the playing field, but only if access is equitable.

During this rush to acquire remote learning solutions, the EdTech industry saw explosive growth. Some of the most privileged students and teachers across the world were able to cope with the changes of school closures and adapted their systems and approaches to deliver remote learning. Wealthier countries were able to provide devices to learners in their homes, and use platforms designed to connect teachers with learners. Even in these wealthier economies, like the USA or the UK, there were still gaping inequalities in the provision and quality of education, widening already existing gaps along socio-economic and other demographic lines within society. In fact, technology's response to COVID-19 widened inequalities and exacerbated the existing learning crisis.³⁵

The only way many of the students the world over could access online learning and communicate with schools and teachers was with their mobile phone. For children and

learners living in poorer countries, or those already displaced by other crises, this was an educational life-line. But this is only the case for the lucky ones who had smartphones or tablets. When so many of the children and learners who are not in school are living in poverty without a device, without internet connectivity, or even electricity, how can EdTech help them? These are issues that affect learners in the most remote areas of the world, and pose barriers for even the most innovative EdTech products.

Using solar power to charge devices is one such innovation that can help bridge this divide. More cost-effective innovation ideas like these can start to help EdTech contribute to the closing of the global equity gap in education. But before that, a lot more investment is required to help solve family poverty, which is a key barrier to accessing education. This is particularly true in low-and middle-income countries, where policymakers and families' ability to adapt to crises is hugely different to those in richer countries.³⁶

Take education to children, not top-down.

“We must put the child in the centre, and adjust our behaviour accordingly.”

– Professor Dr Ger Graus OBE Global Education Advisor, Board Director, Advisory Board & Chair Member

Refugees are often left out of education. Earlier this year, when devastating earthquakes hit Turkey and Syria, lives were lost and thousands of people lost their homes. In this disaster zone, schools were destroyed, and yet learning continued by taking the school to where the children were.

When refugee children enter new countries, their smooth transition into schools and other education settings is not always a priority for those receiving them. It is not unusual for parents to be left to work out the system for themselves, when some do not speak the native language. Their refugee children will have had various experiences of schooling, some may never have been to school. When there is a well-resourced plan of support around the child that involves the family and the school, it can have a transformational effect.

“In a teacher training initiative in Nigeria, teachers wanted to learn and change the mindset of how they teach. They wanted to move from teacher-centred teaching to child-centred teacher. This shift in the teachers' mindset had a transformational effect on learning – raising the self-esteem of the teachers, helping children feel more comfortable coming to school.”

– Fatimah Ogunjimi, Director of Black Belts at 1 Million Teachers

³⁵ United Nations. (2020). [COVID-19 and Human Development: Assessing the Crisis, Envisioning the Recovery.](#)

³⁶ Escueta, M., Nickow, A. J., Oreopoulos, P., & Quan, V. (2020). Upgrading Education with Technology: Insights from Experimental Research. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 58(4), 897-996.

Education systems around the world learnt a lot from the way they had to adapt during the pandemic. Initially, teachers used EdTech to deliver top-down learning – online lessons delivered in the traditional format videoed or live-streamed. As the pandemic continued, there was more of a focus on relationships and community, and pedagogical approaches which used EdTech as a tool improved as teachers focused on the needs of the learners beyond academic learning.

Post-pandemic learners all over the world are increasingly rejecting the 9:00am -3:30pm model of schooling. In the United States, their Department for Education has now prioritised ‘everywhere all the time learning’, recognising the role remote learning can play in meeting students where they are and supporting them to accelerate their learning.

Bringing education to children and centring learning around the student is a necessary shift in our thinking that could be key to unlocking the future.

We need to design curriculums centred around the needs of the child and their unique contexts, whilst educating all learners to realise the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals.

The ideas of child-centred learning and educating for a thriving planet, in-line with the UN’s SDGs, is one that Hannon and MacKay at the Centre for Strategy Education put forward as a new paradigm for education. They argue that there are now two paradigms in play in the education systems around the world.

The 20th century paradigm, on which most education systems are currently based, encompasses the following ideals:

- Education’s purpose is economic growth and individual advancement;
- Education’s function is to transfer knowledge and sort individuals into tracks;
- Education’s means are teacher-centred, academics-focused, and with terminal assessment.

Hannon and MacKay argue that there is an alternative, which is gaining traction amongst educators – the 21st century paradigm:

- Education’s purpose is thriving people, places and planet;
- Education’s function is to empower learners and release human creativity,
- Education’s means are personalised, competency-based and real-world.³⁷

The education gap is a global issue that requires local solutions.

The theory of scaling effective practices is dependent on how the community receives them. In practice a ‘parachuted-in’ approach rarely delivers the same impact as where it was initially designed. Most policies in education fail because they are not implemented well, and sometimes this is because policymakers had not considered the context, or not brought those who need to implement the change along with them. For example, working with displaced Ukrainian children will require different solutions to working with learners in

Rohingya camps. Issues must be understood at a local level, and the community involved in finding solutions. Working with and through communities means solutions are tailored to suit local needs, and whole communities can prosper. Businesses big and small can and do serve communities they operate in well, but we must push for further collaborations between public and private organisations, done in collaboration with communities, to ensure that solutions are not imposed.

³⁷ Hannon, V., & Mackay, A. (2023). [A new politics for transforming education: towards an effective way forward.](#)



We must honour teachers' and learners' dignity to help unlock solutions.

“Dignity is a value that accompanies ‘the human being’ and is intertwined with diversity. Here then emerges the need to give dignity to diversity, every diversity. Therefore, childhood shall be considered as the DNA of humanity, the holder of its own culture, the bearer of rights to which dignity and value must be acknowledged. Early childhood has the right to quality education, and childhood is itself the generator of quality education.”

– Carla Rinaldi, President at The Fondazione Reggio Children Centro Loris Malaguzzi, Reggio Emilia

“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.”

– The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The opening lines of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights emphasise the importance of dignity, with Article 1 of the Declaration further underscoring the significance of dignity.

But, what is dignity? The Oxford English Dictionary defines dignity as **the state or quality of being worthy of honour or respect**.

The Declaration of Human Rights helps us recognise dignity as the essential worth and value of every human being. It reminds us that all humans have equal worth and value; that everyone has dignity. Unlike respect, dignity does not need to be earned, and it cannot be lost. Dignity is a non-negotiable human right. Whilst we are all born with dignity, we have to learn how to honour others' dignity, as well as our own.

Dignity is especially important in education because it helps us to reflect on the unique contribution that every person can make in the world. It also helps us to wonder whether our systems are set up to recognise the dignity of learners. This in turn puts the power of teachers in perspective. On World Teachers' Day 2021, UNICEF recognised them as '...key to accelerating progress towards inclusive, equitable and quality education for every learner, in every circumstance.'³⁸

Teachers should hold immense value in our societies, and yet in so many parts of the world where great quality teachers are needed the most, they are chronically undervalued, overlooked, or simply not there.

We must honour the dignity of teachers, and celebrate their value in our societies.

“Lack of training, unattractive working conditions and inadequate funding all undermine the teaching profession and aggravate the global learning crisis. UNESCO has always placed teachers at the heart of the fight for the right to inclusive and quality education. There is an urgent need to better recognise this profession on which the future of our children depends.”

– Audrey Azoulay, Director General, UNESCO

An EIR report on the status of teachers in 2021 reported that teachers around the world are overworked, underpaid and undervalued. Teacher pay is too low, with the average pay for a teacher in Sierra Leone working out at less than five USD per day. The report told us that conditions are deteriorating, and infrastructure to support teaching and learning is not a priority for government investment.³⁹ On top of this, teachers' workload has intensified, with over 55% saying their workloads were unmanageable. Teacher attrition is an issue at all academic levels globally, but particularly in Primary education where over a third of teachers leave the profession. For those that stay, precarious employment faces them, with the rise of casual and short-term contracts, particularly in places like Sub-Saharan Africa and South-West Asia, where contract teachers receive less pay than permanent teachers, inadequate professional support and poor working conditions. In low-income countries, teachers are educating

learners in overcrowded classrooms, or no classroom at all, often with limited textbooks or other resources.

In countries facing humanitarian crises, teachers are often marginalised and asked to deliver programmes that have been designed by experts sitting around tables on the other side of the world. This can add to the pressures these teachers are already facing with the economic hardship that often comes hand in hand with any crisis.

A lot of teachers enter the profession because they care about young people, and a lot leave because the education system makes it hard for them. We need to make the environment for teachers more attractive and put less pressure on them.

We must raise the profile of teachers the world over. Teachers must be treated with the dignity they deserve. We have to help elevate the role of the teacher and dignify their essential role in the flourishing of life if we want to close the education equity gap.

³⁸ UNICEF. (2021). [Teachers at the heart of education recovery](#).

³⁹ Education International. (2021). [New global report points to overworked, underpaid, and undervalued teaching profession](#).



We need to build the capacity of teachers with high-quality training & strong pedagogy.

Teachers often lack the appropriate subject knowledge or have not had quality training. Teachers globally are using out of date methodologies and pedagogies which belong in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, largely because their education systems were developed with or by the occupying colonial power– be it Britain, America or other European countries. Around the world, the poor quality of teaching is a key factor in the learning crisis⁴⁰.

EdTech has a role to play here in addressing this – offering distance learning, in-service training or blended learning. As with any EdTech solutions, we must approach these ideas with caution when it comes to scaling them across low-income, particularly rural, areas, where we know the technological infrastructure is simply not well established enough for these interventions to take hold. Low-tech, high-impact ideas, like the use of WhatsApp and other messenger systems as catalysts for scaled teacher training, are ones that UNESCO is increasingly interested in pursuing.

EdTech can help create places for online learning for teachers; supporting the creation of communities of practice, improving CPD. Technology can also support teachers by giving them voice and agency.

Whilst the pandemic saw teachers adapt and be creative at an astonishing rate, the skillset needed to be an effective online educator is different to that of an in classroom teacher. As we consider capacity building solutions, it's important to frame this within the three modalities of teaching that exist today – teaching in the classroom, online and hybrid.

We can improve teaching and learning by taking an interdisciplinary approach to innovating and identifying best practice. Integrating cutting edge research across psychology, neuroscience and technology has the potential to supercharge our understanding of pedagogy.

“There is a strong need for continuous professional development for teachers and acknowledgement of their achievements. This builds their confidence and knowledge base, and as a result they feel more equipped and motivated to teach. They see themselves from a different view, that they not only pass on knowledge but impact students’ lives which can change society.”

– Rizma Butt, Co-Founder and Chief Operating Officer, 1 Million Teachers

⁴⁰ Asian Development Bank. (2020). [How Teachers Teach: Comparing Classroom Pedagogical Practices in the Asia and Pacific Region.](#)



Support teachers to choose the tools they need to meet learners needs – EdTech needs to be a tool in service of education.

When we consider EdTech as a tool for education, it's important to distinguish that it's there to enhance the teacher — not replace the teacher. Tech needs to be seen as an enabler, not an end in itself. In many low-tech rural areas schools are almost impossible to reach, and many teachers cannot be convinced to move to these places. If we want teachers to embrace technology, we need to work with them

on the journey – it will require upskilling and reskilling, and one route to explore is whether EdTech experts could be required in schools to help with this. Another idea is to train new teachers joining the profession in new technologies and support them to share their learning with their wider network of teachers within their school and beyond.

“In an average school in the US, there are 1,417 tools for teachers to use, but teachers and learners will only use a fraction of them. Pedagogy has to come first.”

– Kristina Ismael, Deputy Director, US Department of Education Office of Educational Training, United States of America

Learners – particularly children – have the ideas & experience to unlock solutions.

Learners are often overlooked in education planning, yet their first-hand experience of being in the classroom and the fresh ideas are needed to transform it.

Lived experience is defined as the experience(s) of people on whom a social issue, or combination of issues, has a direct impact. The idea of being an expert by experience centres around people who use their lived experience to lead or

inform the work of social change organisations. There are many celebrated examples of this within society – from the civil rights movement in the US, to Alcoholics Anonymous. There is increasing recognition across multiple sectors that involving people with a lived experience of an issue in policy making results in solutions that are more likely to make a meaningful difference⁴¹.

⁴¹ CFE Research. (2020). [The role of lived experience in creating systems change.](#)

Evidence is emerging that this is also true when involving learners as experts by experience⁴². And yet, learner's voices – and especially children's – are overlooked in the design of teaching approaches, courses, curricula and in the transformation of education systems. Children can be researchers & find innovative solutions through play that older people may not be able to see. As children find their own identities they can redesign their futures. This element of childhood is especially important for displaced children, whose entire environment and situation has changed. Children's voices are often ignored, or not sought out in the first place. As they're not active economically or politically, they can easily be forgotten or pushed aside. Yet, they are the source of humanity's regeneration, and often have the ideas, energy and capacity to co-create positive change.

The UN involved almost half a million young people from around the world to create their Youth Declaration on Transforming Education⁴³. In this document, the world's young people call for:

- More agency in policy formation
- A more holistic view of education, founded in human rights and supporting healthy minds and bodies
- Systemic and long-term change
- Decolonisation of education
- Improved climate change education
- Future-proofed skills development

The declaration states that “in order to redeem and remake the state of the world, we must first transform the state of education.” Within the declaration, young people demand that decision-makers include young people in education-related policy design and implementation, as partners, and not just beneficiaries. They also demand further investment into youth leadership and gender-transformative education.

The Youth Declaration on Transforming Education shows great leadership and intent from the UN, and it is important that we all look to best practice to help apply co-creation models from system-change thinking right through to the school and classroom-level to reap the benefits of involving learners and young people in transforming education. Places like the New School in the UK where their approach to learning is driven by giving every leaders a powerful sense of agency to positively influence their own lives and the world around them⁴⁴. Or Lumiar Education, founded in Brazil, where their approach across all of their schools is their commitment to prepare students for an agile and collaborative world, so that they can act in society in a responsible and conscious way as authors of the present and future⁴⁵. The Reggio Emilia Approach is a philosophy based on the image of a child with strong potential for development and a subject with rights, who learns through the hundred languages belonging to all human beings, and grows in relations with others⁴⁶. These places, methodologies and philosophies can help guide us all, whilst ensuring that vulnerable sections of the student population need to be listened to and properly understood to help access their creative ideas.

Co-creation with children, teachers and communities has huge potential. Getting the synthesis right of learner, teacher, parent, elected representatives and academics will be key to transforming education systems. Building partnerships across the system and finding out what they agree on is a pragmatic and strong way to develop the long-term, collaborative ideas that can help solve this education emergency.

We should aim to work with children as co-creators, co-researchers and co-governors of education systems around the world.

“We need to promote a culture of childhood in our societies. This must be the response to the education emergency. But not just the education emergency – but all emergencies we face from environmental to political.”

– Carla Rinaldi, President at The Fondazione Reggio Children Centro Loris Malaguzzi, Reggio Emilia

⁴² Bovill, C., Cook-Sather, A., & Felten, P. (2011). Students as co-creators of teaching approaches, course design, and curricula: implications for academic developers. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 16(2), 133-145. doi:10.1080/1360144X.2011.568690.

⁴³ United Nations. (2022). [Youth Declaration on Transforming Education](#).

⁴⁴ The New School. (2023). [The New School](#).

⁴⁵ Lumiar. (2023). [Lumiar](#).

⁴⁶ Reggio Emilia Approach. (2023). [Reggio Emilia Approach](#).

Long-term collaborative thinking is needed to target action effectively.

Transforming education systems to make them fit for purpose will require deep and meaningful collaboration between all of education's stakeholders, and it will require decisions to be made on a sound evidence base.

“Collaboration is the best way we can respond to the changing global era.”

– Fernando Valensuela Migoya, Global Impact EdTech Alliance and Edlatam Alliance, Latin America, Mexico.

Long-term funding is required, focusing on the Sustainable Development Goals.

It is estimated that in order to achieve the national targets for SDG4 – a quality education – in low-income and middle-income countries by 2030, it will cost a cumulative USD 3.7 trillion between 2023 and 2030, or USD 461 billion per year on average. Of that, the average annual cost will be USD 52 billion in low-income and USD 408 billion in lower-middle-income countries. The cost of pre-primary education will more than triple during that period⁴⁷. Despite optimistic budget projections, many countries will not manage to increase their budgets sufficiently, and as a result the financing gap to 2030 is estimated to be USD 97 billion, or 21% of the total cost of achieving the national targets. This gap escalates to 50% of the total cost in low-income countries.

Education Cannot Wait is the UN's \$1.5 billion fund for delivering education in emergencies and protracted crises. Whilst they are making a significant impact on the UN's quality education Sustainable Development Goal, the private sector can be playing more of a role to join up efforts and create longer lasting impact. Further collaboration with civil society is required to help identify and work with the children that need help the most. Funding needs to be secured over a longer timeframe.

“In light of the concerning decline in foreign aid allocated to education, it is imperative that we explore innovative approaches to financing quality learning. This can be achieved through strategic public-private partnerships that involve political champions, leaders from the private sector, and impact investors. By leveraging such collaborations, we can establish effective models for guaranteeing sustained funding towards education and advancing EdTech in emergencies (EiEs).”

– Nasser Faqih, Chief of Strategic Partnerships, Education Cannot Wait (ECW)

⁴⁷ Global Education Monitoring Report Team. (2023). [Can countries afford their national SDG 4 benchmarks?](#)

Sharing best practice, and scaling effective solutions must be done with a sound appreciation of how it addresses local needs.

Transformation started to happen in England when data was gathered on whether children leaving primary school were able to read and comprehend what they'd read. Some schools are much better at teaching reading than others and supporting others to learn from what successful schools are doing can drive up standards significantly. But in middle-

and lower-income countries, this data is not always available, so creating a baseline from which to measure progress isn't possible, and unless you know what the quality of education is, it can feel like throwing money at the problem, with limited transformation potential.

We will need to consider tension between long-term collaborative endeavours and shorter-term democratic cycles and how this can change power dynamics.

Thinking, working, and acting for the long-term is a challenge when most of the governments around the world change every 4-5 years, and their systems with them. How can we learn from where long-termism is working effectively alongside democratic cycles?

Singapore takes a long-term approach to their education planning with a 20-year cycle. This is not representative of the rest of the world, but they are a blueprint for getting

long-termism right. However, those with the longest-term approaches tend to be less democratic. In a democratic context, Ministries of Education have a short amount of time to make an impact and are keen to do so quickly to appeal to their voters. But centralisation of education policy is a problem. It seems absurd for a small group of Ministers to make decisions about what happens in classrooms. One solution to this is creating partnerships across the system, that represent the whole system, and who work arm-in-arm with elected Ministers.

EdTech must be seen as one of a range of tools in the service of closing education equity gaps.

Support governments to procure based on sound evidence of what works.

Before jumping into solutions like EdTech, we need to decide what needs to be measured to know if it's been successful. What do we want learners to know, understand and be able to do and how to be?

Teachers are flooded with solutions to their needs, and they are struggling. We need to help countries allocate resources to where they are needed. Solutions need to be based on a strong evidence base of what works, and governments need to be supported to procure solutions accordingly. This investment in teacher development will free up more capacity for teachers to focus on pedagogy, instead of deciphering which EdTech solution is going to work best in any given learning activity.

A robust ethics framework around EdTech is necessary.

Sadly, state-level corruption and corporate greed still persists around the world. These are two risk factors when scaling up EdTech solutions. It's imperative to create an ethical build for EdTech around the world. Regulation is needed. A strong strategy for EdTech should be created, orienting around the UN's sustainable development goals, with a particular focus on creating ethical infrastructure and innovation.

“The global education crisis is made up of many different causes and the enormity of it seems almost insurmountable. By breaking it down into smaller, addressable pieces and ensuring everyone feels like they are being treated with dignity then working together we can start to make a significant impact.”

– Charlie Radman, Global Head of HP Education, HP Inc.

Three key recommendations

- 1. Change Must Happen Now: Education needs to adapt faster to our fast-paced and fast-changing world.**
 - a. Education needs to flex to meet the needs of learner in different context and decide how the full spectrum of technology can supercharge these efforts.
 - b. The education gap is a global issue that requires local solutions.
- 2. Learning Communities Deserve More Dignity: We must honour teachers' and learners' dignity to help unlock solutions.**
 - a. Teachers deserve more dignity than they are given.
 - b. Learners – particularly children – have the ideas and experience to unlock better education solutions and we should co-create with them.
- 3. Commit to Long-term Partnerships: Long-term collaborative thinking is needed to target action effectively.**
 - a. Collaborations which involve a synthesis of learner, teacher, parent, elected representative, academics, employers and more will help transform education systems.
 - b. Long-term funding is required, focusing on education to deliver the other sustainable development goals.

Questions for the next phase of the conversation

1. Why does the education sector seem to find embracing technology more challenging than other sectors, such as health or finance?
2. What does dignity look like in education, especially for teachers, learners, and refugees?
3. Can we assume that when teachers honour the dignity of learners, the world prospers? And can we assume that when societies honour teachers' dignity, their impact as educators is also amplified?
4. How does the use of technology affect dignity, and what is its effect through the lens of education?
5. How can we demonstrate the transformative impact of co-creating education systems with invested stakeholders, particularly young people?
6. This report does not address the role of parents and the wider community in the education of the child. To what extent should we delve deeper into this aspect? How can we draw lessons from best practices in engaging the wider community to enhance education systems?
7. Who holds power and dignity within the education system, and how does this contribute to closing the global education equity gap?
8. What are the key drivers and obstacles in creating fairer and more equitable education systems that cater to the needs of all teachers and learners, particularly the most marginalised?
9. In this report, we've approached EdTech as a solution from a learning and classroom perspective. However, what about the possibilities of using technology to collect data that can inform policy decisions?
10. What opportunities, threats, and challenges does AI and machine learning present for education equity in both the near and distant future, considering various contexts?

About the collaborators



About Bett

At Bett, we bring together educators from across the entire education landscape and 600+ innovative EdTech and resource solution providers showcasing cutting-edge and impactful products and services. We are the the global community for education technology.

Our mission is to change the game for education worldwide by equipping education institutions and governments with the knowledge and tools they need to be effective users and buyers of technology. We are better together.



About HP

All over the world, HP's global education teams are working with Ministries of Education, charities and NGOs to take a renewed look at inclusion, and the fundamentals that education plays in levelling up and bridging the equity gap, as well as the nuanced approaches needed from region to region, country to country and even city to city. Over 74 Million students and adult learners have benefitted from HP's 'Enable Better Learning Outcomes' campaign and they have pledged to Accelerate Digital Equity for 150 million people worldwide by 2030.



About FED

The FED is dedicated to the belief that long-term strategic education planning is vital to the success of countries and their people. In the spirit of collaboration, we provide an independent and neutral space for stakeholders to help shape the future of education. Our work provides a platform for discussion, debate and solutions so that long-term local, regional, national and global challenges can be resolved.

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