

DEBAT

Brian A. GALLAGHER

Let us turn to the audience and we will take a couple of questions and then I will summarise them.

Chittaranjan KAUL

I just wanted to add to what I just finished saying. The technology for this exists, has existed for centuries. It is not something that we do not know how to do and in pockets of practically every country you will find this being practised. Therefore, it is not so much a question of do we know how to do it? Yes, we do. Do we have the concern to do? It is the question.

Brian A. GALLAGHER

To be institutionalised and scaled.

Donald J. JOHNSTON

Moderator, thank you. I think you are moderating one of the most important panels of this conference. I say that because I have always had a passionate interest in education. I was Secretary General of the OECD and I personally created the education department, because such emphasis was put on it when I was essentially in the Canadian Cabinet. Now, out of that you may know, we created a programme at that time called PISA, which is the Programme for International Student Assessment, which still plays an important role in allowing people to compare results. They are pretty reliable because most countries do not change a lot of the scale and this takes 250 000 for our first test and now the process is looking at teachers. I am not at the OECD now, but I think it is extremely important and early child education. Let me just make a personal comment, you were talking about these children. I was very fortunate in my own education because I grew up on a small farm in the Ottawa Valley during the war. I was born in 1936 and by the time my brother and I got to school, which was a one-room schoolhouse, we could read, write and do arithmetic because of my mother. One of the things you have got to think about when you talk about good health, good habits, think how important the parents are in terms of early childhood education. From then, I went to a major public school, which was also good because people were drawn from all walks of life and all races and all communities, downtown schools. We have lost a lot of that in the last 50 years. My point is that, that early childhood education to which you refer is very important. Now, moving to even university level where I sat on the Principal's International Advisory Board at McGill, the big debate is what are educating people for? What jobs? Even at university things are changing so quickly and you heard Kemal Dervis this morning point out that the technology is going to be such that in five years we will not recognise the world today. How do you train students for that? How do you train students so that they will not be displaced by AI, which is coming at us fast? The rapidity of changes today is incredible.

Brian A. GALLAGHER

Let us get our panel to react that. One is teachers, so the importance of teachers and parents as teachers.

Donald J. JOHNSTON

That is my experience with my mother. That is why.

Brian A. GALLAGHER

The other is a little bit more on how we educate young people especially to take the onslaught of artificial intelligence and the speed at which things will change.

Eduardo de CAMPOS QUIEROZ

Just a quick comment. You know that I totally agree with you about the family, especially vulnerable families. You are lucky that you had and everybody here probably, most of the people here, should have had their parents as teachers where the development happened. The majority of the vulnerable population does not have this, because we must try to convince governments about how to help these vulnerable people in their homes, in their communities. The science shows that if you do this with quality, you have good results. If you visit people in their homes and in their community, it helps. Another thing, at least in Brazil, teachers, professors are really important. We do have a huge problem in Brazil because they are coming out of universities to teach young people with only theory not practice. We are also trying to convince our policy makers in Brazil to change this. There is huge resistance from the universities. They do not want to change their curriculum, but we are trying really hard to change, because to teach young children you have to know how to interact and everything and they are very theoretical about it.

Brian A. GALLAGHER

Other thoughts.

Chittaranjan KAUL

I can talk a little bit from my own experience of this. We run programmes in India which have the potential of reaching about three million children at various stages of early childhood and so on. It is a large-scale system change effort and we are essentially looking at shifting the teacher perceptions, not so much of course they are skilled and so on, but much more of their role and understanding of who they are and why they are there. We are trying to do that.

Brian A. GALLAGHER

As teachers?

Chittaranjan KAUL

What difference does that really make? What does it change in the society if they are there? It seems that makes a big difference to their abilities to both acquire fresh skills, but more importantly to connect with the children in a way that is much more effective for them. That is one thing that we do. The second thing we do is to recognise that the teacher incapacity is part of a larger systemic question of systemic incapacity, of leadership etc., across the entire system. We work with officials who go all the way up from the grassroots people, all the way up to the state officials who manage those systems, etc. We basically say that everybody who manages that system needs to understand at least three types of leadership. If you run an education system you must be able to provide pedagogical leadership, must know how or why to learn and what the best way is of doing that. You must also be able to provide institutional leadership, which is unfortunately not very well done in our country where most of them are treated centrally as postmen for passing on instructions back and forth. However, we try to help them see that they are actually leaders, managers of those systems, which then creates a certain willingness and an interest in fact, to not only help themselves, looking at their role of being a different one from that of merely a gatherer of instructions from one side to the other. The third thing we would say is, it's very important for all of these people to be able to exhibit community leadership. We know that when communities get engaged with education, then children fare much, much better. We know that when they are not engaged, it turns out to be a battle for everyone. How to connect with the community and make them a part of the children's learning processes, that again seems to help a great deal. As I said, our programmes potentially might reach three million children. We do not think we reach three million children, but we probably reach about 25%.

Brian A. GALLAGHER

Yeah. A pretty good number.

Juliette TUAKLI

Teach them to read and limit the access to electronic media on a daily basis, would be my response.

Brian A. GALLAGHER

We have a red flashing light at us. We are giving back a little bit of our time, I realise, in terms of how that clock started, but we are happy to do that. Let me just finish with this thought. We will take one more questions. It depends how much the organisers will let me ignore this red flashing light.

Odeh ABURDENE

I sit on the boards of various educational entities and we focus on the Middle East. My question to the panel is, when you have society where one group demonises the other, when you have politicians who demonise, that has a major impact on children, on young people. How do we get rid of this demonization? If we really want to have a society of healthy people who are happy with themselves, who feel good about themselves.

Brian A. GALLAGHER

It is a great question. We are very good at dividing each other and marginalising groups. How do we stop that marginalisation in order to create a greater good?

Chittaranjan KAUL

As we were saying earlier, it is a question we have been struggling with since this morning. In some ways I would say that our hope is the children. We have seen again and again that even in societies, for example the place I come from, deep divisions on the basis of caste, background, etc., in those societies where the adults will not talk to each other, the adults will not sit in the presence of each other, children will mingle and play. Unfortunately, what does happen is, as the children grow up, they are socialised into the same sort of social mores and eventually become like them. If we had hope anywhere to create a more inclusive society, a more dialogic society, then I think it would make sense for us to do that when the children are young to help them develop the ability to things as they actually are. This person is not necessarily a demon, the one who is next to me, because he actually looks like me, works like me, thinks like me, feels like me. It is important for children to see that. Second, to try and see if we can build, not build, but retain the capacity for dialogue that those young children have for a little bit longer. If we can take them to 20 years old, I think we will have done the job well.

Brian A. GALLAGHER

Let us take this last one right here and then we will have to wrap up.

Touria BENLAFQIH

Hello ladies and gentlemen. I am so sorry to barge in, but I cannot let the one session opportunity go without a young person talking. I am within Generation Y, I am 32 years old and work with generation Z, with 15 to 20 year olds. Although we thank you for all the efforts you are making for education in the long-run, we need to solve many problems in the very, very short-term. In my experience, I think that education is a very complex problem that will need many years to solve, but all the other programmes that we can run at the same time with school, whether it is extracurricular, STEM, arts, photography, anything. All the young people I work with want to do things with their hands. They want to be involved, not in a classroom getting information, not in front of a laptop getting information, but doing stuff and making stuff and learning by doing. Please, if you can just shift your focus onto the short-term goals as well. Thank you very much.

Brian A. GALLAGHER

Say something about the short-term.

Juliette TUAKLI

That is a very important observation, because where children or even adults do things with their hands or create with their hands, it induces a sense of self-competence and accomplishment. That in and of itself is a positive social development factor and I think that I decry the loss of the opportunities for children to create pottery, sculpting, engage in music, just the arts that give us as human beings, right from small to adulthood, that sense of being more than just what we are learning from our books.

Chittaranjan KAUL

Just to say that learning by doing is the best way of learning there is and of course our young children, young people, benefit greatly when we do that. The connection of head, heart and hands is a very special one and the short-term and the long-term do not have to be separated out. When the short-term happens, the long-term follows, but I think it does need to be first of all to a particular plan. There needs to be a sense of where we are going, and I think that is what the long-term does and what needs to happen now is using the hands, which is what the short-term does, absolutely.

Eduardo de CAMPOS QUIEROZ

Just to finish up, you are talking about social emotional skills, learning by doing. One thing I disagree with you, I think we can solve educational problems in the short-term. We do have to work hard, because everybody tells us that education is too complicated, too ideological, but how many generations are we going to lose if we do not solve it in the short-term? I really believe at least in Brazil, that we can solve the education problem.

Brian A. GALLAGHER

Let me wrap with this thought. Even though we have got two former bankers here in the middle, I am pretty confident in saying for the three of us that work in the human development field and one in the field of medicine, the answer to the question about how we stop people from demonising each other, is to make a commitment to equity. I grew up in a part of the US that we talk a lot about today politically, former steel country, Standard Oil, oil refineries. Back when I was growing up, if you had an African-American, black American working next to a white American, working next to a Mexican American, all in US Steel, making USD 25 an hour, everybody was happy. There were 125 000 steel jobs in this part of the region of the mid-west, just outside Chicago; today there are 3 000 jobs. I went off to college and most of my friends went into the mills, and those are the populist movement today and I am a global elitist. If we cared as much about the path they took, as the path I took and especially people of colour, the minorities in societies and focus on equity, and I am now speaking to political and economic leaders, that will be the future of our economy and the future of our political system. We want to re-build back democracy; however we define it, representative government, then equity is the answer and a human-centred focus on equity. That is about growing the marketplace, but in a way that leads to human success as well.

Thank you for letting us be a part of this session these two days.