Learning from lockdown
Summary of report

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The child's perspective

Lessons for the future of digital education

In this summary we outline the findings from our interviews and online surveys with **426 children between the ages of 10-16**, looking at the children's **own** view of their of digital learning experiences during lockdown[1].

We also highlight the views of a group of leading academics, educationalists and experts in the education field whom we invited to give us their view on the future for education in the digital age.

As enlightened educators have predicted for more than thirty years, the way we teach our children is at a crossroads.

1 May - July 2020

Contributors to the report

Sam Clough

Sam is Strategic Insights Director at SuperAwesome and has been dedicated to providing insight on children, young people and families to enable marketing and strategy for over 25 years. In the past 6 years, she has been at the cutting edge of this audience's digital transformation with SuperAwesome, and before that she worked across many major consumer, entertainment and toy brands for young children and teenagers. (sam.clough@ superawesome.com).

Professor Dragan Gasevic

Dragan is Distinguished Professor of Learning Analytics and Director of the Centre for Learning Analytics at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia. He also holds the honorary Chair in Learning Analytics and Informatics in the Schools of Education and Informatics at the University of Edinburgh. He is a co-founder and former President of the Society for Learning Analytics Research.

Tony Little

Tony has spent many years in schools, including being headmaster of Eton College. He has also been Chief Academic Officer of a large international schools' group and is currently chair of governors of a multi-academy trust and a state sixth form college as well as an international school in China. He has particular interests in developing pedagogy and the benefits of digital education.

Sterling Proffer

Sterling Proffer is a business strategist and entrepreneur focused on democratising access to specialised knowledge. Previously, he spent a decade at VICE Media, where he launched several brands (e.g. VICE News), platforms (e.g. VICE on YouTube), departments (e.g. Growth, Business Strategy, and Strategic Partnerships), and participated in many of the pivotal transactions and moments in the company's rise.
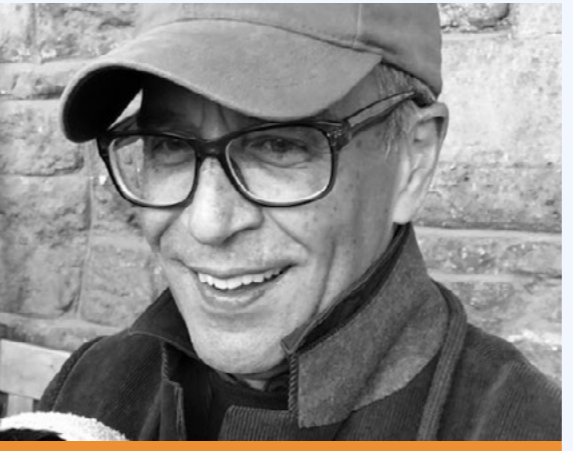
Richard Taylor

Richard is a leading independent commentator on education, effective EdTech solutions and public policy. He has set-up and sold MARCOMS, an educational agency in Australia, founded *The Assignment Report*, the UK's leading source of education industry news and, for the last decade, has been an early-stage investor and commentator on the UK Edtech space.

Dr Rebecca Torrance Jenkins

Rebecca obtained her PhD in the practical application of educational neuroscience to learning following several years' experience as a science teacher. She reviews and writes for education journals, produces short videos about neuroscience, and is the co-founder of the NeuroFiles education project, which brings findings from psychology and neuroscience into classrooms and homes to enhance learning.

Highlights from articles in the report

Allow agency and motivation to shape the future of learning

"We need to transform distance teaching into a vibrant, relevant, enabling distance learning 'pathway' in which young people feel they have agency, direct their own traffic, and in which the power of networking is harnessed to help them progress.

Above all, this survey underlines to me the vital necessity of recognising agency and motivation as the beating heart of successful learning."
Tony Little (p. 6 of report)

Invest in access to digital technology and improve digital content

"Edtech content for teachers and the 'curriculum-led' approach is far-removed from the engagement, quality, range and interactivity of tech products that children generally use (and enjoy) in other aspects of their lives.

Progress will be limited if we think we can change much by spending only 1.3% of our education budgets (UK) on any form of edtech for schools.

We could find that in a world of reduced government and school budgets, edtech will veer further towards the end- consumer (parent/ child) market just as tech has done in other sectors."
Richard Taylor (p. 26 of report)

Introduce strategies in schools now to develop independent online learning skills

"Research shows that successful online learners need strong independent learning skills, high levels of self-motivation, good time-management, and competent technology and digital skills.

[We need to provide] effective ways for students to become 'adaptive learners' [and use] learning analytics to… estimate learning progression, knowledge building, study skills, motivation, confidence and the needs of each learner in real-time and over long periods.

Learning Analytics can also provide personalised feedback to the learner, encouraging the student to take agency over, and so optimise, his/her own learning. It can be the foundation of the way we evaluate young people as they become the independent adaptive learners that they need to be."
Dr Dragan Gasevic (p. 32 of report)

Highlights from articles in the report

Give children 'agency' in their learning...

"One of the greatest gifts to give a learning child is the skill of self-regulation. It is a lifelong skill that sees them beyond school, as independent, flexible and adaptive learners.

Showing teachers and parents how to enhance the way their children interact with information, integrate it and apply it can only be beneficial. Teaching children how their brains learn, and how to make learning productive and pleasurable, is now more important than ever."

Dr Rebecca Torrance Jenkins (p. 29 of report)

The forces of change are now headed for the education industry...

"Dramatic industry transformations take place when three conditions are present: a new technology, an economic rationale, and a cultural catalyst.

Together, the three 'conditions' shape the size and speed of the transition [and] those same forces are now headed straight for the education industry's ivory towers.

Incumbents have a window to transform. I suggest they use it."

Sterling Proffer (p. 38 of report)

The world has changed; children use digital tools in all aspects of their lives: for play, chatter, collaboration, creation, content, sharing and now learning...

"Having their kids at home has given parents an insight into the range of digital tools they use and they too are getting involved: using the tech, worrying about privacy, realising that conversations around how much screen time is appropriate are far more nuanced than they ever thought...

There is a growing recognition of the benefits of blending tech-enabled learning with more traditional methods as pupils return to the classroom"

Sam Clough (p. 35 of report)

Key findings from our survey

Of the children forming the focus of our survey:

94% saw positives to learning in lockdown such as greater independence and the ability to manage their own time.

91% said they liked being able to work at their own pace.

90% enjoyed the freedom to find things out for themselves on the internet.

58% enjoyed the autonomy to plan their own day.

47% said they enjoyed learning at home.

What they missed most about school was:
- not being with their friends **76%**
- the chance to share and discuss ideas **48%**
- face-to-face interaction with their teachers **45%**
- playing sports **41%**

"I like to go off on my own and read extra things related to History" **Henry, 13, UK**

"It doesn't feel like school is taking over my whole day... I've been able to take up my own interests." **Imogen, 14, UK**

"I think I do more work...and [am] learning more... because my teachers give me a lot of independent work." **Xinji ,10, UK**

"The one good thing is that it has taken the pressure off...it's given him time. When the homework comes in... because it's not ticking boxes, it gives him time absorb it, and he's like, wow, that is quite interesting and he independently navigates his way to find more information." **Parent, UK**

Key findings from our survey

87% considered digital learning tools useful/helpful for their learning.

83% would like more time to use them at school.

79% would like more time to use them outside of school.

95% would like their education to provide more of the skills they need for their futures and to be more relevant to the real world.

77% said they were driven to learn in their own time by their desire for good grades or by their teachers or parents, rather than because they liked to learn.

Only **33%** of children associate remembering what they learnt at school with what they will need for a job.

When you grow up and start working at a job, what do you think will be important?

- Being able to work in a team · · · · · · · · · · · **66%**
- Knowing how to find things out for myself · · · · · · **63%**
- Being creative and original · · · · · · · · · · · · · **62%**
- Understanding how best to use the internet · · · · · · **38%**
- Being able to remember what I learnt at school · · · · · **33%**

"Recently I've been in a big competition [outside of school]. We ran our own business for a couple of months and we made a profit. We had a website... [with] designs online; 20% of our profit went to charity." **Suhani, 14, UK**

"You can code something to make TNT explode, or you can make a moving sunset... You can use your imagination and make them [into] something real." **Sydney, 10, Canada**

"Our children have lost all motivation because it's all about exams... and they're missing the whole point of education... they've lost that love of learning." **Parent/ teacher UK**

"Most of us are teaching towards the guidelines, exams, Ofsted's mark-scheme criteria... All it takes is for [Ofsted to say] we want independent learning online and then all teachers will be... trying to demonstrate this... And every head [will] jump on it." **Teacher, UK**

Learning to Make A Difference

In lockdown, children enjoyed having some AGENCY over their own learning.

They wanted:

- **to be free to find things out for themselves;**

- **to be able to work at their own pace;**

- **for their education to be more relevant to the 'real world', and**

- **to be inspired, motivated and to understand clearly the 'purpose' of their learning.**

Almost all the academics, parents and teachers we spoke to agreed with them.

Our findings support the view that effective independent learning online is not promoted within the straightjacket of the current educational model, where learning is instruction-led, within strictly-defined curricula, and focused on memory-based summative testing.

The pandemic also highlighted the failure of the education sector to prioritise investment in the needs of the **learner** rather than the teacher.

In the 21st Century, the way we educate our young people must:

- foster independent learning skills, creativity and self-efficacy;

- genuinely engage the learner by using high-quality media;

- promote learner agency; and

- overturn the overwhelming reliance on summative testing.

ITZA believes that the effective use of digital content and analytics can be a catalyst in bringing about this change and is building products that address these needs.