

OLPC: Education as Investment

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The Millennium Development Goals have highlighted education as a major priority of the international community in raising global equity while cutting world poverty in half and allowing billions of more people to participate in the global economy. While the benefits gained by learning and knowledge building are end-goals unto themselves, education is also a catalyst for economic growth and political stability. By elevating a single child, education supports the elevation of an entire community and an entire country.

At the World Economic Forums and G20 Summits education has been declared, not as a cost, but as a necessary investment for economic prosperity. From an empirical and scientific research perspective, education is directly linked to economic gains. Studies indicate that each additional year of schooling raises the average Gross Domestic Product between 0.37% and 0.58%. Additionally, education also yields higher economic returns for individual households in the long-term by cultivating skilled workers with the potential for significantly higher wages. A single year of primary school increases the wages earned later in life by 5% to 15% and each additional year of secondary school by 15% to 25%. For girls, these numbers are even more profound, where an extra year of primary school will boost a girls' wages by 10% to 20% and for secondary school 15% to 25% (source: Innovating in Financing Education: Report of the Writing Committee to the Task Force of Innovative Financing for Education 2010).

Education is a foundational building block for addressing many of the challenges facing the developing world. The lasting benefit of investing in education comes from a complementary investment in infrastructure. Many studies have shown that those investments are also associated with higher productivity, job creation, and increased trade, and improvements in social services. However, the ability of an emerging market to utilize these enhancements to actually reduce poverty is going to be almost entirely dependent on creating a skilled and qualified work force to stimulate local innovation, ever higher-order jobs, and economic growth.

The One Laptop per Child initiative sits at the nexus of these investments and emblemizes the notion of education as investment, while simultaneously enhancing the learning experience through access to technology, building crucial skills for a work force, providing an inexhaustible library of resources, and equalizing opportunities for children across communities and regions. Governments, Ministries of Education, and other local partners and global institutions invest in these durable, rugged, low-power, and low-cost laptops in order to transform the learning experience for children. Over five years, investing in laptops actually becomes cheaper than purchasing textbooks, and these laptops bring a library of books and updatable textbooks and materials to the fingertips of children instantly.

Connected laptops owned by children drive learning even before infrastructure is built or teachers are hired and trained; education is always accessible, both at school and at home. The millions of children out of school and the millions more lacking a quality education need a fast and effective response before years of opportunities to learn in the crucial, developmental stages are lost. OLPC provides these learning opportunities quickly while building on the potential to harness new critical thinking skills.

Education is development; education is the foundation of building human capital and creating socio-economic equality. Studies and reports on the One Laptop per Child initiative clearly demonstrate that from rural Rwanda to the highlands in Peru to the refugee camps of Gaza, children harness their curiosity and are motivated to learn with their laptops, specifically designed for self-empowered and collaborative learning. By empowering one child, we work to empower entire nations. Education is the building of human capital and the entry point for creating socio-economic equality. One Laptop per Child can accelerate the development of innovative human capital by providing the know-how and critical skills to bridge social-economic inequalities.

One Laptop per Child seeks to jumpstart and reinvigorate the learning process through laptops specialized for education. By investing in one laptop for every child we make a commitment to invest in education and reap the future benefits of a more educated and more equal global community.

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