Advanced tech can't address needs of remote learning

The shift to remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic has thrown into sharp relief the weaknesses of edtech and how many students' needs are not being met by remote learning, according to experts.

They said educators were cautious about trying new technologies, while students wanted simple interfaces and learning tools. In addition, low-income children were at a disadvantage, as 75% of Black and Latinx families did not regularly use computers, while younger pupils struggled both with the technology and their short attention spans.

Why does this matter?

Edtech is a growing industry largely targeted at addressing the gaps of education that regular schooling doesn't cover. The COVID-19 crisis, however, has seen technology increasingly relied on for core educational functions due to many children being unable to attend classes in person.

Unfortunately, small, innovative edtech firms capable of addressing a variety of educational needs lack the capacity to distribute their technology widely. Instead, larger firms have been contracted to distribute more corporate tools as a stop-gap for schools. While Big Tech undoubtedly has the capacity to fulfil this need, popular programmes such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and

Skype are <u>unable</u> to facilitate the important teaching dynamics of a classroom.

On the other hand, the adoption of some edtech solutions poses various other problems for educators, leading to legitimate hesitancy. E-learning systems are typically reviewed and vetted by regulation panels and education bodies before being distributed widely. Without this review process, curriculums may be circulated that ultimately prove harmful to school children. One such example is <u>Acellus</u>, a learning platform widely distributed in some US states and used by 6,000 schools worldwide. It was ultimately flagged by students, parents and teachers for racist, sexist and otherwise offensive inappropriate material.

Lateral thought from Curation

Parents were largely responsible for action taken against Acellus, which led to increased awareness of, and investigation into, the platform and <u>its backing company</u>. But they shouldn't have had to be. Federal regulators and school boards should have intervened in the distribution of the material well before it ever reached students.

At a time where COVID-19 has added an immeasurable amount of pressure onto people's working lives, studies, financial security, and mental health (to name only a few), working parents face the added responsibility of safeguarding their children and offering a level of supervision previously offered by a qualified teacher, all while maintaining a full-time job.

Companies looking to support their employees through this kind of turbulence should extend their efforts beyond just the workplace and into the work-home, since the two are becoming synonymous.

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