

Student Voices

Project Report



TakingITGlobal partnered with the International Society for Technology in Education over March and April, 2005, to consult with youth from around the world on their experiences with education and develop a set of recommendations that we could communicate to teachers. The consultation lasted five weeks, each with a different focus. Topics ranged from the role of technology in the lives of today's youth, to the difference between learning and education, to the look and feel of an ideal classroom, to the impact of globalization.

Over 275 students from every region of the world applied to be a part of our process. Over 150 of these applicants were chosen, representing a balance of region and gender. Of this group, 87 participated on a regular basis in one of two ways: guided discussions and photoblogs. Four of the most active and diverse students were then chosen to help us develop and present this report.

The result of this consultative process, after five weeks and 1,300 submissions, is the following set of four themes, which will be explored in the following pages:

- 1 Effective learning involves a partnership between teacher & student
- 2 Our education should respect and assist in our goals
- 3 Technology is a tool, not a course
- 4 Our environment affects our learning

This is only a small part of what was discussed as part of the consultation. To view all discussions and photoblogs please visit:

► <http://www.takingitglobal.org/studentvoices>

Participant Biographies



Beth Kimberly, 22

Mathematics & Strategic Communications, University of Kansas, United States

Beth Kimberly is a recent graduate of the University of Kansas in Lawrence, Kansas, where she studied Mathematics and Strategic Communications. She spends much of her free time reading about the field of education, both from books and blogs. Beth believes that through education we can create a more peaceful, healthy world. Next year, she would like to work in the field of education.



Dilmurod Nasimov, 19

Faculty of Economics, Samarkand State University, Uzbekistan

Dilmurod entered university on a government grant when he was 15 years old. He will graduate with a Bachelor's degree in June. Next year, Dilmurod will continue his education with a Master's, and then either a PhD or a career in the non-profit sector. Outside of school, Dilmurod began playing chess when he was 6 years and even was second between the youth in Samarkand. He also plays tennis and soccer.



Cherrie Hei Ting Kong, 19

Year 2 BSc (Biomedical Science), University of Auckland, New Zealand

Cherrie is... mad keen to get into Cancer Research, passionate about Learning & Education and currently in a steady relationship with ICTs. As an over-committed, and dedicated student, she looks forward to hypertension and other stress-related problems in the not-too-distant future. Cherrie believes in responsibility, unity, action and justified paragraphs.



Shraddha Uprety, 18

Grade 12 (science), Delhi Public School, BPKIHS, Dharan, Nepal

Shraddha is a final year high school student, just a few months away from making a major transition from school to university education. An optimist at heart, a believer of change and deeply in love with life and humanity, she looks forward to devote her life to improving the general health and education condition of people in the developing nations. For her education is that 'secret and accurate weapon' that can bring her dream of the new generation of peaceful, critical but yet tolerant and compassionate humanity come true. "I cannot do everything; but still I can do something; and because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do something that I can do."—Anonymous

1 Effective learning involves a partnership between teacher & students

We learn most effectively when teachers act as our partners, not our rivals. Learning is an interactive process where both the teachers and students play critical roles. The best teachers are those who serve as facilitators and learn with their students. They should be aware of both the limitations of their knowledge and also their own unlimited potential, as well as that of their students.

"We would like to have teachers who are more of facilitators, who would accept their mistakes and learn with us... By understanding us and by learning with us, they shall help build our confidence and a positive outlook towards the world." — Shraddha, Nepal



Learning together
— Simon, Australia

We also see tremendous value in the reversal of roles: letting students become teachers. Our fellow students have a wealth of experiences, opinions, skills and talents, from which we can all learn a great deal. This should not be limited to students in our own class or school. Using ICTs, we can learn from students the world over who have lived through circumstances we can barely even imagine, grew up in vastly different cultures with different values and traditions, and have completely different outlooks on life and the world.

"I think 'teachers' and 'students' as defined names don't necessarily have defined roles. Students learn from teachers and similarly, teachers learn from students - both directly and indirectly." — Cherrie, New Zealand

2 Our education should respect and assist in our goals

Every student is an individual with individual needs and goals. Additionally, every student comes with a wealth of informal learning and experiential knowledge. We need teachers and a curriculum that recognize this. An individual's education should prepare him or her for the world—how to react and respond to the circumstances encountered, build confidence, and most importantly, how to act, react, learn and think critically. Education shapes our person's lives. However, formal education is only one of a multitude of factors doing so, and must respects its place as only a portion of any one person's life. If this can be done, and education can be flexible enough to take into account students' circumstances, backgrounds, strengths, and out-of-school knowledge, its impact will be phenomenal. Technology is the obvious means for this customization of the curriculum.

"I learn best from hands-on experience. I love every opportunity to work and learn from others who already have experience. This is one reason I enjoy volunteering so much. When volunteering, I get to meet and learn from different people." — Beth, USA



Celebrate our diverse backgrounds and experiences — Charity, Canada

Learning is not restricted to formal, in-school education. In fact, in many situations, other experiences can provide better learning. Many schools have moved to recognize this, offering co-op programs, community outreach opportunities, and individualized programs that give students more flexibility in where and how they learn. The end goal should be to help us better understand the world, and learn how not just to survive in it, but how to contribute positively to it.

"If your knowledge or education does not translate to development, then what use is it?"
— Kolawole, Nigeria

"I think we give far too much emphasis to education (which is passive) in comparison to learning, which is most definitely active. Education is relevant only so far as it helps me learn."
— Simon, Australia

Education—The Global Context

"We are also worried about the gap that technology can potentially create between the haves and the have-nots. We are concerned about the technological resources reaching every child in every corner of the world." — Shraddha, Nepal



Varna, India

While technology has opened doors to new forms of learning, it has not done so consistently, across the board. While many of us have computers at home, and some in our classrooms, others have limited access to computers in isolated labs. Still some of us are lucky to have textbooks and a reliable supply of electricity, let alone computers with Internet access. For many, language barriers abound: while an overwhelming percentage of the world's population does not speak English, the majority of resources on the Internet and on other technologies are available solely in that "universal" language.

Privatization and globalization are two of our other biggest concerns. In some countries, education funding is losing out to many other government priorities, and as a result, becoming more privatized and expensive:

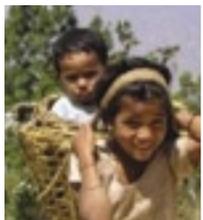
3 Technology is a tool, not a course

Information and communication technologies are an increasingly important part of life in every part of the world. While developing strong ICT skills is essential to our future success, it should not be a process isolated from the rest of our curriculum. We do not need computer classes—we need computers in classes. Access to the Internet, even just a few computers in a class, can open our eyes to a world of diversity, innovative techniques, and new experiences.

“Technology is here to help us learn. It breaks geographic barriers. Language barriers. It bridges cultural differences, religious, political, personal beliefs. It spans time. It should push/break psychological barriers. In a way, technology is very much a stepping stone or even a metaphor for life.” — Cherrie, New Zealand



The Internet – Connecting People
– Patrick, Philippines



Shraddha, Nepal

“Education in the Philippines is no longer treated as a basic, fundamental right to be enjoyed by all but increasingly more of a commodity up for sale to the highest bidder.”
— Joegies, Philippines

We feel that while globalization opens our minds to new perspectives and ideas, it has the potential to put our cultures in jeopardy.

In many cases, a global focus and drive to produce workers for the global economy has come at the cost of local language, history and traditions. Many of us expressed concern that many people, particularly in cities and urban areas, where Western culture has had more influence, want to adopt every part of it. Our festivals, culture, language, and many other aspects of our society are threatened.

Finally, poverty is, in many parts of the world, our biggest barrier to achieving many of dreams and ideas we've discussed:

“For us in Africa, we have a lot of barriers to making our Dreams for better education a reality... Until we are able to reduce poverty and improve the living conditions of people, we may not be able to achieve our dream for Education in Africa.” — Kolawole, Nigeria

“We need to create a learning environment where it feels like everybody is learning together—perhaps in different ways and different speeds and at different stages—but knowing that everyone else is learning.”
— Cherrie, New Zealand

“I was sitting under a tree, thinking about nature, when the idea of my ideal classroom came into my head... the best place is far away from the city, far away from the daily routine, in a calm place with no type of disturbance... We can study in the open air, admiring the beauty of nature, and also getting fresh air.” — Qadir, Mauritius

The ideal classroom is not necessarily even a classroom: learning can and does take place everywhere. Whether the classroom is in a school building, under a tree, or in someone's kitchen, there are a couple of factors that can help us learn, from small class size to diversity—diversity in terms of the tasks undertaken, the composition of the class, and the tools used to teach and learn.

“A small class size means personalized attention and an interactive learning environment that enhances each student's holistic development.”
— Paul, Kenya.

However, we realize that the ideal classroom is far from reality for some than for others. There are important, basic concerns that remain to be addressed. In classrooms around the world, we have yet to secure adequate resources, from up-to-date texts to desks for each student, to a roof to shelter students from the weather.

4 Our environment affects how we learn

Our classrooms shape the way we learn, and thus must reflect the collaborative, fluid, and interactive style of learning that suits us best. The traditional classroom, with the teacher sitting at the front, lecturing, writing notes on a whiteboard does not accomplish this. A set-up that facilitates group discussion and interaction is a good first step. Open spaces, windows, and easily accessible computers and Internet go a long way to improve our learning environments. We would like to contribute to the design of these learning spaces. Giving us a chance to impact the spaces in which we learn gives us an added sense of responsibility, passion, and connection.



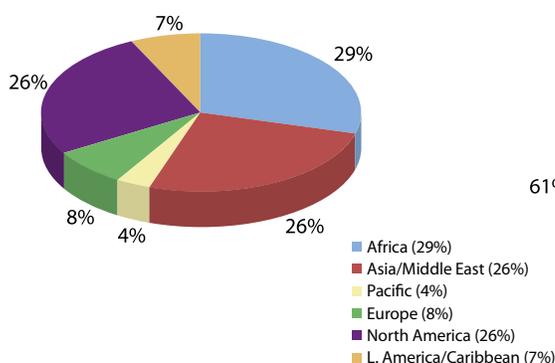
Showcasing student work in the ideal class – Ursula, Slovenia

About the Participants

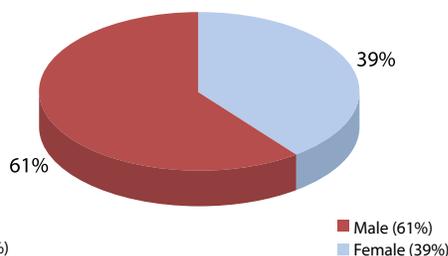
Of our 165 selected participants, 40% were female and 60% were male. 80% were between the ages of 16 - 25. 29% were from Africa, 26% each from North American and Asia/Middle East, 8% from Europe, 7% from Latin America/Caribbean, and 4% from the Pacific region. There were participants selected from:

- Afghanistan
- Angola
- Argentina
- Austria
- Azerbaijan
- Benin
- Brazil
- Burkina Faso
- Cameroon
- Canada
- Congo (DR)
- Costa Rica
- Cote d'Ivoire
- Cyprus
- Dominican Republic
- East Timor
- Egypt
- El Salvador
- Fiji
- Germany
- Ghana
- India
- Indonesia
- Iran
- Iraq
- Israel
- Jamaica
- Jordan
- Kenya
- Macedonia
- Malawi
- Mauritius
- Morocco
- Nepal
- New Zealand
- Nigeria
- Norway
- Pakistan
- Peru
- Philippines
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- Slovenia
- Somalia
- Sweden
- Tunisia
- Uganda
- United Arab Emirates
- United Kingdom
- United States
- Uzbekistan
- Zimbabwe

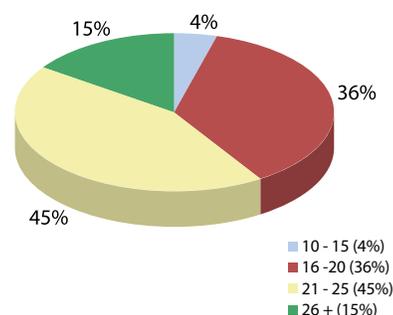
Regional Distribution - Potential Participants



Gender Distribution - Potential Participants



Age Distribution - Potential Participants



About ISTE

ISTE is a nonprofit professional organization with a worldwide membership of leaders and potential leaders in educational technology. We are dedicated to providing leadership and service to improve teaching and learning by advancing the effective use of technology in K-12 education and teacher education. We provide our members with information, networking opportunities, and guidance as they face the challenge of incorporating computers, the Internet, and other new technologies into their schools.

Home of the National Educational Technology Standards (NETS), the Center for Applied Research in Education Technology (CARET), and the National Educational Computing Conference (NECC), ISTE meets its mission through knowledge generation, professional development, and advocacy. ISTE also represents and informs its membership regarding educational issues of national scope through ISTE-DC. We support a worldwide network of Affiliates and Special Interest Groups (SIGs), and we offer our members the latest information through our periodicals and journals.

An organization of great diversity, ISTE leads through presenting innovative educational technology books and programs; conducting professional development workshops, forums, and symposia; and researching, evaluating, and disseminating findings regarding educational technology on an international level. ISTE's Web site, www.iste.org, contains coverage of many topics relevant to the educational technology community.

► <http://www.iste.org>



About TakingITGlobal

TakingITGlobal (TIG) is an international organization - led by youth and enabled by technology. TIG connects youth to find inspiration, access information, get involved, and take action to improve their local and global communities.

Headquartered in Toronto, Canada, with a growing worldwide presence, the organization's flagship program is TakingITGlobal.org, the most popular online community for young people interested in connecting across cultures and making a difference, with hundreds of thousands of visitors each month.

TIG also works with global partners - from UN agencies, to major companies, and especially youth organizations - in order to build the capacity of youth for development, support youth artistic and media expression, make education more engaging, and involve young people in global decision-making.

To see all the participants' photoblogs and discussions, go to:

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