COVID-19 Enquiry

Education – Digital Capacity – ensuring equity in primary and secondary education (K-12) beyond COVID-19

I am a teacher with 25 years of experience. The digital learning environment provides educators and students with endless opportunity and necessary skills provided digital technologies can be accessed.

The disparity of access to digital technology across Australia in education for K-12 has exacerbated around the delivery of remote learning that has been necessitated by the COVOID-19 virus.

The unevenness in both public and private capacity to equip students with the tools to access learning represents a reality that teachers must manage every day in classrooms, that is, not all students have 24/7 access to the tools required to learn effectively in the digital age.

For example, schools that have laptop programs that equip every student with the same device and thus capacity to access the curriculum digitally, can more easily devise education programs because there is a shared understanding amongst students and teachers about how to access digital technology in that particular school environment.

On the other hand, schools using bring your own devices (BYOD) have some additional complexities. For example, exactly what devices do students have access to? Have students/families adhered to school recommendations for minimal data etc?

The States administer how students can access and use computer software and hardware in the public education sector, but this is not uniform across Australia.

The COVID-19 epidemic has highlighted the disparity in how our students access technology in Australia.

The questions that need answering include:

- How can Australia's various education systems create greater equitability equitable to access technology for students in both public and private sectors?
- Should all schools use uniform hardware/laptop programs for students to ensure all students have the same starting point?
- BYOD programs may save money for schools or Education Departments, but do they benefit students or teachers?
- What role does the Federal government have in ensuring equity in digital capacity for the Australian primary and secondary education sectors?

Jo Culshaw

Educator