

Transcript of session

Fresh from our Davos panel discussion with Queen Rania Al-Abdullah of Jordan and Gordon Brown, British Chancellor of the Exchequer...

Her Majesty commended the World Economic Forum and the British Council for bringing young people to Davos. “This is a generation of content creators,” she said, “active agents...people we have to bring into the conversation.”

Gordon Brown said that he came to listen. He hailed “the youngest ever platform at Davos...apart from me.”

Reacting to our presentation [link], the Queen described the proposal as ‘very doable’.

“We have to look for quality...The thing that brings education to life are quality teachers...It’s about bringing honour back to the profession.”

Gordon Brown praised the proposal for a World Fund for Education as “idealism combined with a plan for action.”

He called on all the major countries to come together to support quality education, while underlining the need to teach students to be global citizens.

Supporting the formation of a virtual or real world fund for education, he warned that “if we don’t make this effort, there will be a very heavy price to pay because others will do what we should have done years ago.”

A fund needs “a mobilisation of resources and energy...it’s something we *could* do.”

Her Majesty, the Queen told the team how proud she was to be part of the panel. “You are potentially a politically transformative force,” she said.

Closing the session on behalf of the Greenwich 60, Yoo-Sun Andrea Choi thanked the world’s leaders for their attention.

“We hope you will jump into the boat we have created,” she told them.

Gordon Brown’s introduction

“This is the youngest ever platform at Davos...with the exception of me. Surprisingly for a politician, I’m here to listen, because I think we’ve got huge amounts to learn.”

“From the Wisdom of Youth project in Greenwich last week has come this demand, which we’re going to hear explained today, that every child and every young person in the world has the chance to have education.”

“If you think of the history of the world, it has been divided by all those who have had the chance to make huge progress, and for the centuries the huge waste of human potential. This is a turning point generation. We can actually create the situation where every child

and every young person has the chance of education. And that's why I'm delighted the demand is not just coming from businesses and from organisations with a professional interest in education – it's coming from young people themselves.

“We are part of a discussion about one of the greatest gifts that the world can give the younger generation – that is the chance of education for all. That's why I'm delighted to be here – indeed privileged to be here – to listen to the wisdom of youth.”

Queen Rania

Very doable, achieving access for all is not an impossible goal.

A Harvard professor said, “If you thought education was expensive, try ignorance”.

Access should be the lowest common denominator

Investing in girls' education is the highest return on investment in terms of development

When you put girls through school, you can really change the course of a nation

If you have quality teachers who are committed, inspired...that makes all the difference

It's about bringing honour back into the profession...for teachers to take pride in their profession

Jonathan Charles

Youth are very creative and they have that basic hunger [for education]

Gordon Brown

Nelson Mandela once said that “Idealism without any plan for action is mere abstraction, and a plan for action without idealism is simply directionless”. What we have got today from our young people is that idealism combined with a plan for action, that is indeed the way forward for education.

We must make our priority...to ensure every child in the world has education, by a plan that each country is in a position to adopt. There is deal made, a partnership, between the richest countries of the world that say we are prepared to finance deliverable plans for education, and the developing countries that are prepared to say we will make it our business to have the education reform and investment that is necessary that every child has the chance of an education. I think this is possible over the next few years, and that we are making a start.

[Recently in Abuja] we were asking the children what their ambitions were – they wanted to be scientists, engineers, teachers, doctors, nurses – very high levels of ambition. The children said ‘we demand better education, it is our right, but we cannot afford to pay for it, and something must be done’. We have 80m children not going to school – a denial of a

basic right. Children going to school in shifts, without the books and equipment necessary, we are short of 30m teachers we need. It is absolutely clear we need a plan to deliver this.

All the major countries of the world have got to come together to support this idea. We have put up £8.5bn over the next 10 years, that could educate 15m children – but we need America, rest of Europe, all the oil states, to contribute.

I believe that we need the private sector as well as the public sector to be involved. This will work if it's a private/public partnership.

Basic education has got to be free for children – there are too many countries where user fees deter particularly girls from getting an education.

This is now urgent – there is a Millennium development target, we've got to meet it and ought to meet it by 2015, we are not in line to meet it, we've not made the progress necessary. The education of one child at the moment is only \$100 per year - \$2 per week, partly because we pay teachers so little. The total cost is probably somewhere around \$10bn – a small sum of money, the equivalent of \$0.04 for everyone in the richest parts of the world per day. It is absolutely the most cost-effective and most economical investment the world could make. It is not simply the right of every child to have an education, the moral imperative to act where people are being denied chances which all of us know are essential to a civilised life, the economic need for countries to be able to make the economic decisions to have an educated workforce for the future, the social cohesion that comes from citizens that are taught to be citizens in our schools. There is also a strategic imperative – if we don't recognise, that in the advanced, industrialized countries that if we do not make the effort to build this partnership to provide education, then we will pay a very heavy price because others will be there to do what we should have done years ago and we should certainly do it urgently now.

We need sustained long term funding – if we could have a private/public partnership...we could make almost immediate progress. It is not talk, it is not directionless, it can actually start now.

Comments from the floor

[Irish person] - I want to congratulate all of you on wonderful articulation of your plan and idea. As well as gender being incredibly important, there are over 8m children with a disability in the world. And if we can educate access for all, we can move from a model of dependency to contribution.

[Gordon Brown] – that's vitally important to what we are trying to do. This is education for every child. I do believe we've been slow to wake up to this [HIV/AIDS] problem. We have to make provision for this in our plans, and it is possible and can be done.

[Queen Rania] – there is a huge gap, it is imperative for us to bridge that gap. Education is one of the great equalisers. Technology helps us to standardise the quality of education, it feels inherently unfair to me where we all enjoy internet access from our homes, offices, schools, whereas many millions of people languish in a digital desert, where they don't

have the most basic infrastructure to support basic communication tools. That gap is one I would really like to focus on. For our times, our societies have become very diverse, bringing people from different religions, cultures, background, and as a result, maintaining social cohesion has become more of a challenge. Without knowledge, a culture of fear is exaggerated when you don't have knowledge of one another. That's when people choose isolation over integration, and the best way to combat that is through proper education, mutual knowledge. That's what allows people to crawl out of their shells, reach out to the people in front of them.

[Grandmufti of Bosnia] I commend Davos and the British Council to bring us to this subject, because I believe education is our salvation. I like this idea of wisdom of youth, even though when you are between 15 and 16, you will always say you are 16; when you are 60 you say you are twice 30! I am reminded by another wisdom, you shall never neglect 4 small things; small fire, small disease, small enemy and small wisdom. I think we are here not just with a small wisdom, it will become bigger and great, but also we are here with young wisdom. I hope that you succeed.

[Jewish Grandfather] I waited a long time for the voice of youth, and I talk to you as a grandfather, and next to me is a grandmother, my wife. And I just want to say that when we were babies, our chances of becoming grandparents were zero, because we were born in Amsterdam, occupied Amsterdam and people saved our lives and risked their lives because they had quality teachers, they were [santified?] so what you say about quality is so extremely important, it saves lives. We are grandparents now of six grandchildren, and we want them to live in this world. I think the fund is doable, not only this fund because you need the girls to go to school, and in order for them to go to school, you have to have toilets, 1.5bn people have to have toilets. And the Millennium goal is possible, and I would like just to end – we have risen to climate change, amazingly, all of us, but this is not without hope. Climate change means that we have to be engendered, and education is one of the primary ways in which we can really stand up to the climate change. This is the inner climate change and the outer climate change and I think that we need more than even business and governments, we need citizens to citizens. If there would be voluntary taxation, just one thousandth of a percent of every citizen – in 2015 every child will have quality education.

[Mr Singh of India] In lots of economies, across the world, education has to be part of the economic renewal process. The whole awareness battle is not building up as it should. There is a cultural problem of one size not fitting all – there are schools with only girls, only boys, set far from people's homes. I would imagine the Global Fund for Education would have to view education as an economic additive because when you're educated and literate, you also solve other problems such as population, you look at birth control from a different perspective.

[Gordon Brown] If you take HIV/AIDS, all the evidence is that if the girls and boys are at school, being educated, the incidence of HIV/AIDS is a lot lower. Education is about economic opportunity and economic development. But it's also about bringing people together, social cohesion, global citizens, and it also has a huge impact on health. At the end of the day, countries with their existing budgets are capable of persuading people that

this is a priority of any civilised country's budgets to contribute to the rest of the developing world.

[British person] The UK has taken an exciting leap forward with this project.

Queen Rania

The world has had some success in multi-stakeholder partnerships. We can take this initiative – it's not too ambitious, it is doable, we have the right mind and resources, it is just getting the form into place. I think with people like the Chancellor, this is very doable.

Gordon Brown

You need a mobilisation of both resources and energies if we're going to meet this Millennium Development Target. It is not technically, scientifically, or in any other way impossible to educate 80m more children. It is something we could do, there is no great secret about how to build a school or train teachers. It can all be done. What we're missing is political will. And not just political will from governments, but citizens too. It is a wide ranging partnership that is possible. You must have a co-ordination of this, it will not work if it is patchwork, you will never persuade people the money is being well spent unless they can see that there is an overall result as well as an individual improvement. We need something, whether it is a fund, or a virtual fund, where the money is seen clearly to be put in to education.

The one thing about education is you can actually see whether children are at school or not, and you can count them and you can find out where the money is going.

I say a mobilisation, I say that all of you here can be involved one way or another. You can involve the NGOs, charities, faith groups and the business community. All the pressure should be on your home governments, and other organisations to make them see the wisdom of being part of and contributing to moving this forward. We've got to move to the next stage, if we don't commit to this this year, then we will be seen by the rest of the world to having failed to deliver on the Millennium Development goals that were solemnly signed up to.

Andrea

I think we are here to try to make you remember once how it was to be our age, to be full of hopes and aspirations and dreams and I know that education is often talked about and why we are here is basically to take that next step, to take words and change it into action and change it in to change in the world throughout. And we're hoping that all of you will jump in to this boat we have created and make it in to a reality.

Simon

For me I think the energy we see in the room now, and the commitment that people have in principle, delivering on these things, is powerful but what we need to do is remember that the benchmark shouldn't be just getting kids to school, it's actually making sure that when

they're there, their teachers are there, that they're in a classroom that they can actually learn in and that their education is something that's worth calling an education.

Queen Rania

I just want to say, how proud I am to be part of this panel, and how inspired I am by you. And how it's very important for you to realise you are a potentially socially and politically transformative force. Just by seeing how you are taking the initiative today, I think it is very inspiring. And one of your jobs is to keep us young, because youth is not just a number, it's about keeping a youthful spirit and the more we can stay linked to you, and your needs and aspirations, and your views, the more we are able to serve you. And I think you have an important job in keeping us young in spirits and also I think you have a very important role to play as a voice for moderation. I think yours can be a very persuasive and eloquent voice for tolerance, for global justice, and for the moral conscience that we all need. I just want to say how very, very proud I am of everything I have seen today.