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"Digitalization. Responsible strategies for business and society"

Keynote 4: Anthony Salcito

How technology in education can promote critical skills for the modern global workforce

Across the globe, economic success is deeply connected to success in education. Standard education, however, is not adequately preparing young people for the digital economy now and in the future. High levels of youth unemployment indicate that many countries have a significant gap between the needs of employers and production, and those leaving university. This can only change when a new mindset is used in the classroom to think about how to prepare students for the economic future. According to Anthony Salcito, "The digital future starts in the classroom of today."

Over the last 30 years, technology has not been rigorously adopted in the classroom. Where technology is present, it is underused. Technology in education does pose challenges in areas such as online safety, data ownership, and data control. If technology leaders and educators are aligned, however, with a shared belief in the need to transform how learning takes place, such questions can be answered and the transition can happen holistically. Teachers and students can be supported in leveraging technological opportunities, in understanding what digitalization really means, and in creating a pervasive cultural shift in education, across all learners, teachers, and organizations.

The conflict in education has focused on skills vs. content: education in the last century being built around content but the digital economy requiring skills - of leadership, collaboration, and critical thinking. It is a mistake to think of this as a conflict, Anthony Salcito argued, "When you understand algebra as a foundation for building and learning abstract thinking to advance mathematics, then students like it and are more excited to apply it to solve real world problems."

The focus has to be on the opportunities made possible through the adoption of technology in education, not on technology as an end point. This applies to the way data is collected and analyzed to create insights which personalize, guide, and support learning opportunities, rather than just monitoring students' progress. It applies, also, to the potential for virtual reality, seeing it as enabling greater subject immersion, as well as a deeper connection between education and real skills - allowing students to learn in a near-real environment.

To achieve this paradigm shift in education, there must be clarity on outcomes across all education, and we must celebrate the heroes, the teachers, inspiring them to do more and to embrace the opportunity to use data to drive progress and lift performance.