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Subject: OLPC  
Date: Wed, January 31, 2007 1:30 pm  
To: knut@fair.no  
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Dear Knut Foseide  
[knut@fair.no](mailto:knut@fair.no) <mailto:[knut@fair.no](mailto:knut@fair.no)>

I have read your letters about OLPC and I would like to answer in some detail with all my due respect for your ideas and the work FAIR is doing around the world. I think your criticism is based on some misunderstanding about the mission of OLPC and the current state of engagement of the different countries involved in our project. And most important I would like to make clear our view about education, a view which is based on many decades of hard work.

First, OLPC is working only with the age group 6-12. The schools are elementary/primary schools and the teachers who will receive the XO are teaching in these schools. XO is designed for children. This makes the great asset of XO among the large variety of laptops in the market.

XO is not an expensive tool and the proof is that countries as Uruguay are engaged to distribute them among all the kids and teachers of elementary schools, public and private. A similar program will be implemented in Libya. Larger countries that cannot cover the whole population will follow their own agenda. Argentina, for instance will focus in the poor and remote communities.

Second, OLPC is not school-centered but child-centered. The XO will go to the child and to the teacher not to the school. The school is only a hub of the whole system. This is the essence of the OLPC program. In traditional programs based on computer labs children use the computers during a very limited amount of time and this is a shame because children learn and teach all the time in the most diverse environments. XO is the right tool for them and the OLPC investment per hour per child makes perfect sense in comparison to the traditional budget.

Your proposal of recycling computers will only reproduce the wrong setting of restricting the computers to the school labs. Children need to have their own computer with them, all the time they want, not to be restrained by the school hours and strict lab regulations. The traditional computer lab is very inefficient.

Third, there is a hidden budget in the rich countries where most children have computers at home. The amount of money spent for computers at home must be added to the budget of the school, 10 to 100 times the budget of the computer lab. This is an enormous amount of money. OLPC can bridge this huge digital gap because the XO will be given directly to the kids who will use the same computer at school and at home.

Fourth, OLPC is starting with a very large number of children in every country engaged in the program. It is a matter of scale, like vaccination you cannot do it in small and diluted doses. Our aim is to reach the whole population not to provide some new computer tools to every school because the computer labs reproduce an obsolete model of teaching and learning. OLPC offers a different kind of educational model based on a constructivist view of the child's neurocognitive development which is supported by robust scientific evidence. Recycling Pentiums in a PC-lab is not a good model to educate millions of children in the XXIth century. We need something new and adapted to the mental development of our children, not a tool for expert adults but a rich digital and educational environment for all.

I hope that these points of clarification may add to a better understanding of what OLPC really is.

Sincerely yours

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