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Future of learning: obsolescence of knowledge, return to real teaching

- By Ki Mae Heussner

Leading entrepreneurs and thought leaders provide a look at the future of education in a short documentary from Ericsson. It discusses how technology is changing the way students learn as well as what it means to learn and teach in a connected era.



The future of learning is far more than [new devices](#), [digital content](#) and [online classrooms](#). It means potentially rewritten relationships between students and information, teachers and instruction, and schools and society.



In a short documentary released Tuesday, telecom giant Ericsson pulls together observations from leading voices in education technology and entrepreneurship to give a high-level snapshot of what the future of education could look like and how technology is leading it there.

The 20-minute film, called the [Future of Learning](#), which is part of the company's ongoing [Networked Society project](#), is particularly timely given the momentum behind online education platforms like [Khan Academy](#) and [Coursera](#), adaptive learning technology from [Knewton](#) and the [transition to digital textbooks](#).

It includes commentary from Knewton founder and CEO Jose Ferreira and Coursera cofounder Daphne Koller explaining how their startups are shaping the new world of education. But it also draws out broader insights from thought leaders like author Seth Godin and academic Stephen Heppell, as well as input from leaders bringing connectivity to villages across Africa.

Ericsson's corporate interest in celebrating networked education aside, the video does provide a compelling look at how technology is changing the way students learn, as well as what it even means to learn and teach and be educated in the 21st century.

As schools adopt new instructional technology, debate has centered on the changing role of teachers, with critics concerned that online videos and other tools will diminish the role of the teacher. But in the film, Coursera's Koller says one of the revolutions in education is that teaching will be less about conveying information and more of a return to its original roots where instructors engage in dialogue, develop critical thinking skills and spark passion about a discipline.

Sugata Mitra, professor of educational technology at the UK's Newcastle University, goes beyond defining the role of the teacher to examining the function of knowledge.

"Knowing something is probably an obsolete idea," he says in the documentary. "You don't actually need to know anything. You can find out at the point when you need to know it. It's the teacher's jobs to point young minds to the right kind of question. The teacher doesn't need to give any answers because answers are everywhere."