BETT ~ The Great Education Debate: Can technology ever replace the classroom?
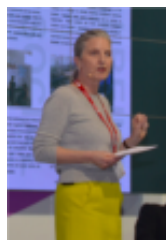

Great, to contribute to the closing debate at BETT 2014: 'closing Ceremony' – The Great Education Debate: Can technology ever replace the classroom? "A panel of passionate experts join us to discuss the future of technology".

Alongside Anne-Lise Kjaer, Maggie Philbin, Simon Milner, Ian Bauckham, and joined by Jon Briggs, (the UK voice of SIRI) we discussed whether tech can take the place of a class, teacher, and much, much more.

In this goal driven age, we could think that education is imparting a body of knowledge, rather than a shared journey of discovery. There are so many pressures put upon educators these days that enjoyment, inspiration, creativity, and fun can be forced out of the classroom.

We need to inspire young people and fire their imaginations; enhance their creativity and confidence so they can pick ideas up and start to juggle with them; encourage resourcefulness through challenge, but also the ability to reflect, change and benefit from the experience of others; to motivate a love of learning for life.

Anne Lise Kjaer (@kjaerglobal) Futurologist, Kjaer Global Anne Lise Kjaer is a renowned futurist & speaker. As founder of trend management consultancy Kjaer Global, she advises leading brands, including BMW, & others.

Ian Bauckham, President, ASCL Ian Bauckham has worked in education since graduating from Cambridge University in modern languages, and is currently headteacher of Bennett Memorial Diocesan School in Tunbridge.

Maggie Philbin (@maggiephilbin) Most people know Maggie from her work on the much loved Tomorrow's World but she has stayed on the pulse of science and technology ever since.

Maggie's now presenting Bang Goes The Theory and in the last five years she's reported for BBC Breakfast, Inside Out and BBC Webwise, as well as heading up the BBC's Digital Switchover and writing for The Guardian. In 2008 she created TeenTech, an interactive science and engineering event for teenagers which was awarded Best Engineering Event by the British Science Association in 2010

TeenTech now run large scale events in twelve regions of the UK including N.Ireland and Wales.

In 2012 with the encouragement of Buckingham Palace she set up the TeenTech Awards which encourage teenagers to work with industry and academia on projects to make life 'better, simpler and easier' in categories identified as key industries of the future. The inaugural Awards in June 2013 were an overwhelming success and will now run annually.

At the WISE Awards in 2012 she won the Communication and Outreach category of Women of Outstanding Achievement for her work with TeenTech. In the same year she received an Honorary Doctor of Technology degree from De Montfort University for "bringing a greater understanding of science and technology to the public". In 2013 she was given the Promotion of Design Award by the Institution of Engineering Designers for her work as a broadcaster and with TeenTech.

Simon Milner is Facebook's first UK and Ireland Policy Director, responsible for issues such as privacy, safety and advertising policy. One aspect that Simon covered, succinctly, was the fact that there usage policy prohibits under 13s from using the site, so primary schools should not be encouraging their children to use this form of social media, but secondary schools need to provide quality guidance for their students.

All of those on the panel sung the merits of intriguing learning WHEREVER it takes place. Fascination is a tool that can be easily neglected. This digital world, when mixed with the analogue, brings such potential for communication.

The question, at the core of the session, was about the classroom, but we all thought more about the un replaceable role of the teacher. Refreshing to hear at a technology conference.

Everyone seemed to agree that those of us lucky enough to use technology are still (something like) the richest 5 percent of the world's population (do feel free to quote the accurate statistics) and that, whatever the design, and structure of the *building*, it is still quality teaching, & learning, that makes the difference.

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