Foreword

Beeban Kidron

Baroness Kidron is the founder of 5Rights Foundation and a Crossbench Peer in the UK House of Lords. Where she has been a world leading advocate for digital regulation and accountability on behalf children and young people. She is known as the architect of the Age Appropriate Design Code, which prompted a radical redesign of digital products and services to protect children's safety and privacy. Baroness Kidron is a Commissioner on the UNESCO Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development, a member of the Global Council on Extended Intelligence and member of the Advisory Council for the University of Oxford's Institute for Ethics in AI. She has recently worked with bipartisan lawmakers to introduce the California Age Appropriate Design Code, a significant advance in US regulation.

This volume of essays offers refreshingly diverse perspectives on the state of education data. Overwhelmingly, we learn that, if the goal is to maximise the benefit for children in processing their education data, you would not start from here.

The scope of the essays is as broad as the data gathered - from the fingerprint in the school lunch queue; the lack of clear benefits to children of hotly promoted EdTech tools; the extraordinary obfuscation about what is collected, who owns what, and where it goes next; what education data processing is damaging and what would 'good' look like. Encouraged to imagine a better world, several authors tackle the failure of government and regulators to grasp the enormity of the issue while allowing an increasing role for private companies in school settings. Worryingly, it appears convenient to accept services that may or may not work and that most certainly gather data that are so intimate and yet shared so widely that it might impact on the outcomes of a child for a lifetime.

Some essays look at technological and social models that might give more agency to teachers and parents, others look more profoundly at what it would be for a child to be the ultimate owner of their own data. All agree that doing nothing is not an option.

Falling out of these pages is fair amount of frustration that we have not found a better way of unleashing the power of data processing to benefit children. There is no doubt that if technology was focused on wellbeing, learning, best interests (of the child and broader educational community) our ability to harness positive data driven outcomes would be transformed. Simultaneously, a drumbeat throughout the essays is that, unless those who have the power to insist on a more equitable system use that power effectively, we are on an inevitable path in which children at school are fodder for purely commercial interests.

The Digital Futures Commission has spent nearly three years looking at this issue and will in the New Year publish its cumulative findings in *A Blueprint for Regulating Education Data*. This blueprint will encapsulate the voices of school leaders, teachers, parents and caregivers and, of course, children, all of whom who point at the extraordinary asymmetry of power between them and the EdTech sector. It will therefore serve as a challenge to government to ensure that business innovates in the best interests of children.

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