

Technology and Inequality – Call for evidence

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This is not really my area of expertise but I would note that inequality in digital access during the pandemic exacerbated income-based inequalities in learning of course. So, focusing on education, digital is important but only one part of the story. Perhaps the best paper on this for the U.K. is below:

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/1475-5890.12240>

The story is complex though. Just as providing kids with laptops doesn't improve their outcomes, nor does inequality in digital access explain poor outcomes in and of itself. It is the entire learning environment of the child, both in school and out.

So, from an education perspective, whatever we say in this space we need to be clear that inequalities in income and material circumstances of households are the major driver of inequalities in child outcomes and "digital" is just one aspect of that. Radically improving access to digital technologies would therefore remove one barrier but while family income inequalities remain so entrenched, it is unlikely by itself to make a major difference.

Of course, the story for exclusion among adults (low income, the elderly etc) and the importance of unequal access to / confidence with digital technology in explaining their exclusion might be a very different story.