



**Cisco Systems.**  
**Podcast Transcript: Changes in Global Education with Michael Stevenson,**  
**Vice President for Global Education**  
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**Peter Shaplen:** Hello, and welcome to this podcast series about trends, technology and business. I'm Peter Shaplen.

Cisco's Vice President for Global Education, Michael Stevenson, wants to change the way people think about education -- the way teachers teach and students learn. For Cisco's Stevenson, this isn't just an overdue educational reform, but a formula urgently required to meet the needs of an emerging, technologically driven world.

**Michael Stevenson:** It's about identifying the skills that young people need to flourish in today's economy and society -- critical thinking, complex problem-solving, creativity, collaboration.

Now to get to those skills, we're going to need to do teaching and learning in different ways. Very often, it won't be the old subject-bound, fact-based approach; it'll be project-based. It'll be across subject boundaries. It'll be drawing experts into the work. It'll be focusing on real-world problems. That kind of learning, we believe, is best set up to deliver those skills.

And if you look at the collaborative technologies, they're there for a purpose. They, because they focus on collaboration and creativity in their nature, are the best equipped in a wider teaching environment to support that kind of teaching and learning.

**Peter Shaplen:** Stevenson is a former TV documentary producer for online learning programs who also served as a strategist for the Education Department in London. That blending of communication and scholarship has blossomed into invitations to conversations with a diverse cross section of educators, administrators, government officials, and business executives among others, including parents -- all who share his sense of urgency.

**Michael Stevenson:** I think that there have been people around the world who've been thinking about system change in education for some years. What we're thinking about now is a more thorough-going transformational agenda, which takes all of that but focuses on 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching and learning, and collaborative technologies that drive that whole agenda.

**Peter Shaplen:** That transformation will require maximizing technology, networking, and a collaborative approach fostering new skills, as well as new forms of teaching and learning them.

Stevenson believes Cisco's role is unique and irrefutable.

**Michael Stevenson:** It is about helping people with some of the toughest, the toughest jobs in the world; of large-scale educational system change. Cisco wouldn't hold back from helping out in the health sector, the retail sector, the financial sector. And I see no difference between those sectors and education.

And what I do think is that we would bring some kind of expertise and interest that people would recognize and trust in how you go about really large-scale, system-wide change.

This company has been working hard on the education agenda, investing millions of dollars in tough reform programs -- Mississippi and Louisiana, the Middle East. That is a reason to work with Cisco. Because it's not fly-by-night, it's not in today and out tomorrow; it's in it for the long haul, and it's proven. We're saying we see a big vision, an ambitious roadmap; and we'll walk with you along that road.

**Peter Shaplen:** Those who study education reforms believe the time is ripe, as technology has made transformative change more realistic, affordable; and the challenge less intimidating.

For the children, Michael Stevenson believes it is more essential than ever before, lest yet another generation lose its opportunity.

**Michael Stevenson:** Well, five years ago, I don't think we had networking technologies of the weight and ability to shift big systems that we have today. So we do have those now. Wait another five years, and of course the networking technologies will be even better. But that would be another half generation of kids that had to go without.

So now, I think, is the moment. But let me qualify it in this way -- this is not simply about networking technologies. This is not an educational technology offer. This is about education transformation which takes advantage of networking technologies to drive it. And that's a critical distinction.

**Peter Shaplen:** Such changes will be articulated and implemented differently in cultures, organizations and countries around the world. And each will be holistic.

Stevenson, in his role as a lightning rod and champion for global education change, is also appealing to those whom he believes are most passionate about real change -- the teachers, and all those who care about their students.

**Michael Stevenson:** Right around the world, teachers and school leaders have been under the cosh for years -- some would say for decades -- the victims of one generation after another of governments-inspired reform. Too often, those reforms have been about -- if they've been reforms at all -- have been about efficiency, effectiveness, numbers, administration.

There's a whole generation of teachers out there, we believe, who want to stop talking about that-- important as it is -- and start talking about the heart of what they do, which is teaching and learning, and doing that better for the generation of kids that are going through with them at the moment.

**Peter Shaplen:** For global companies like Cisco, the need for educated, trained and competitive work forces are pivotal in plans for continued growth and economic success, both in the United States and overseas.

Stevenson says the potential benefits for Cisco, among others, are huge. While students of all grade levels can feel the impact of this transformation, the greatest beneficiaries will be the youngest students.

**Michael Stevenson:** This works best if you take this kind of approach -- inquiry-based, collaborative approach -- with kids in the elementary phase. They then build on that as they work through these much more complex, project-based pieces of work in the later - the secondary years.

But there's no doubt at all that given a good foundation in science, in math, in literacy, kids coming through into the secondary phase can pick up this way of learning.

So, miss out in primary -- it's a shame, but it's not terminal. You can certainly pick it up and go through with it, I would hope, into the tertiary sector of education as well. There's a great challenge here for universities and colleges around the world not only to pursue their traditional research agenda -- which they do fabulously well -- but also to think about how better to teach young students, and how to give them this kind of experience.

And I believe that if you look at Cisco's work -- often with partners, sometimes with other technology partners -- in Jordan, in Mississippi, Louisiana -- the work of the networking academies -- 16,000 institutions in countries right around the world offering IT and networking skills -- there's reason to believe that this approach -- 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, teaching and learning, and the use of collaborative technologies -- will bring change, given a bit of time.

**Peter Shaplen:** Time, plus vision, plus collaboration, and the factor of commitment -- all part of the equation that describe 21<sup>st</sup> century education transformation, as well as the mosaic of Cisco's Vice President for Global Education, Michael Stevenson.

In Orlando, Florida, for Cisco, I'm Peter Shaplen.