

course fees	reverse
unwilling	However
practical	over
blended learning	supported
low-income	setting up
cost-effective	long-term
rise	maximise
view	unaffordable
major	workforce
for instance	indicate

Encouraging school-leavers to take college courses

Over the last ten years there has been a fall in the number of teens finishing their studies at age 16 or 17. Statistics indicate that they are opting to leave school as early as possible, either because they are unable or unwilling to take their education further. It is clear that this could have a negative impact on the skills, knowledge and qualifications of the general population. It is therefore essential that governments find ways to reverse this trend.

We need to begin by asking why young people do not see college as a good option. A major factor is certainly the cost. For many low-income families, college fees, materials and equipment are simply too high. Reducing fees would therefore enable many more students to attend college. However, for the government to do this, it would need to use a very large part of its total budget for education, year after year.

It might be a more cost-effective solution to offer young people more flexibility in *when* and *how* they study. If governments encouraged colleges in developing online courses and blended learning programmes, more young people could study at a time and place that was convenient to them. Students with daytime jobs, for example, could choose to do their coursework and attend workshops or online webinars in the evening or weekends.

While these kinds of programme would be expensive at first, but once the courses were established, it would be a more sustainable approach. Now we have the technology, we should use it to create more educational opportunities for the young generation.