

# spark of learning



children from India learning from a 'Skype Granny'

two months, the children surprised him by asking, in English, for a faster processor and a better mouse! When he asked how they knew all this, they said that they taught themselves some English so that they could understand the machine that only talked in English.

The project was so successful that it became the inspiration for the hugely successful film *Slumdog Millionaire*. The film was based on a book entitled *Q&A* by Vikas Swarup. Swarup said that his book was inspired by the Hole-in-the-Wall experiment. He said, 'I realised that there's an innate ability in everyone to do something extraordinary, provided they are given an opportunity.'



children learning from a computer in a wall, India

In 2010 Dr Mitra initiated another project for children in India – this time using a Skype connection. Mitra explains: 'When I last visited India, I asked the children what they would like to use Skype for most and, surprisingly, they said they wanted British grandmothers to read them fairytales.'

Dr Mitra recruited a British woman to spend a few hours a week reading to the children and set up webcams so that a life-size image of the storyteller is projected onto a wall in India. He now has 200 volunteers reading to the children via Skype. He also has retired teachers and educators regularly teaching slum children in India by Skype. <sup>3</sup> Hundreds of children in India are now learning from 'Skype Grannies', but Dr Mitra's plan is to create a School in the Cloud using retired teachers as a resource for children all around the world to tap into.

In 2013 Dr Sugata Mitra was the winner of the \$1 million TED\* prize for his revolutionary work with Indian children and for showing the power of 'Minimally Invasive Education'. Dr Mitra believes that technology should be seen not as a threat to teachers, but as an asset. <sup>4</sup> With the prize money he will continue to fulfil his wish of building a School in the Cloud, where children can find information and learn from one another.

\*TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design) is a global set of conferences under the slogan 'Ideas Worth Spreading'.