Online conference

“CONNECT 2.0 - Combine Online Novation and Networking for Education Catered by Technologies”

“Developing Key Skills for the 21st Century”

12-13 December 2023

Join the Conference:

Day 1: International
Day 2: SCO countries only

Language: English

The conference is co-organized by the UNESCO Institute for Information Technologies in Education (UNESCO IITE), Huashi Education Group, and Europass Teacher Academy.

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1 At the time of registration for the webinar, please mind that you need to consent to processing of your personal data according to the UNESCO Online Privacy Policy
BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE:

Online, computer-mediated, and mixed mode of teaching and learning entered our lives during the pandemic, and it is safe to say they are here to stay. That rapid ‘technologization’ of the educational processes additionally illuminated the long-recognized need for, and accelerated digital transformation in education. Besides, the on-going digital transformation of education corresponds with UNESCO’s activities focused on achieving the Education 2030 agenda and SDG4 for education through promoting ICT capacity building and Open Education in the era of AI and digital technologies, to strengthen quality in education and lifelong learning. At the same time, there are still serious mismatches between skills being taught in schools and TVET institutions and skills needed by the job market, and the mismatches are anticipated to grow in correlation with higher rates of automation and AI integration (Bughin et al., 2018b quoted in [1]).

With this in mind, in July 2023, SCO Member States issued a Statement of the Council of SCO Heads of State on Cooperation in Digital Transformation [2] stressing the need to join forces for unlocking the full potential of digitalization across all sectors of economy. In the Statement, the clear connection between promoting digital literacy and full realization of human potential and skills development for social and economic development was emphasized.

Recognized in the Statement as a driver of global, inclusive and sustainable growth, accelerated digital transformation can contribute to achieving high level of digital literacy and skills development for all citizens and ensure the full realization of human potential as well as to realizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals [2]. Specifically, encouraging and supporting teachers in employing various ICT and AI tools in both physical and virtual classroom will not only contribute to improving digital literacy skills among teachers and learners alike, but will also create more engaging teaching and learning experiences and will facilitate an easier and smoother acquisition of many skills vital for the 21st century. Such skills include but are definitely not limited to green skills for sustainable future, skills to ensure equality and inclusion, digital economy and financing skills, and leadership skills. The recent emergence of generative tools (such as ChatGPT and alike) has only added to this pressing need for developing 21st century skills with ICTs and AI.

Curriculum policies increasingly focus on competences that students are expected to develop during the process of learning across specific subjects and disciplines and that they need to succeed in education and for personal development, future employment and inclusion in a knowledge society.

In this regard, it is helpful to identify the skills which will ensure success in life for today’s schoolchildren in the knowledge society of the future. Across various frameworks it is acknowledged that ICT is at the core of 21st century skills. [3] In their recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning (2006), the European Parliament and the Council set out eight key competences: communication in the mother tongue; communication in foreign languages; competences in mathematics, science and technology; digital competence; learning to learn; interpersonal, intercultural and social competences, and civic competence; entrepreneurship; and cultural expression. (Source: CEDEFOP 2011, quoted in [3]). Additionally, The Beijing Consensus on Artificial Intelligence and Education [4] requires all Member States to ‘be cognizant of the emergence of a set of AI literacy skills required for effective human–machine collaboration, without losing sight of the need for foundational skills such as literacy and numeracy’. The Consensus calls for ‘preparing all people with the appropriate values and skills needed for effective human–machine collaboration in life, learning and work, and for sustainable development’. [4]

In this regard, a project implemented by UNESCO IITE together with Huashi Education Group (HEDU; project entitled “Connecting schools online for inter-cultural teaching and learning: IITE – UNESCO Associated Schools Network Pilot Project for Shanghai Cooperation Organization Countries”) has been
contributing to the ambitious goal of providing ASPnet teachers and beyond with practical tools to teach specific subjects and topics with the help of ICTs and AI potential, including interactive and online tools.

The concluding event of the project is an international online conference CONNECT 2.0 (which stands for “Combine Online Novation and Networking for Education Catered by Technologies”) dedicated to the topic of developing certain skills in schoolchildren with the help of ICTs and AI, thus preparing them for a successful future. Focused on ASPnet community from Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) countries, the project nevertheless does not limit itself to only those countries and provides the worldwide community of educators with an opportunity to participate in the conference, and to listen to keynotes and panel discussions on the related topics.

There is not a definitive and exhaustive list of the skills that will be central to the job market and prosperous social life in 2030, yet, there are already identifiable trends and directions regarding the set of soft skills which will be necessary for working and living in the future (see, for instance, [5], [6], and [7]). With them in mind, the organizers of the CONNECT 2.0 conference chose to focus on the following:

- Digital Teaching and Learning to Advance Green Society
- Skills to Ensure Equality and Better Inclusion in Education
- Facilitating Digital Economy Skills Development in Schoolchildren
- The Role of ICT in Developing Leadership Skills

**AIMS OF THE CONFERENCE:**
- to stimulate search for practical ways to promote digital literacy among teachers and learners alike to ensure the full realization of human potential and people-centric development of SCO Member States in the future (in accordance with the Statement on Cooperation in Digital Transformation);
- to encourage the exchange of practices of teaching life skills and digital skills when teaching school subjects with the use of digital technologies;
- to inspire networking and development of network projects between and among schools in different countries.

**TARGET AUDIENCE:**
The conference is going to be of particular interest to teachers from ASPnet community and beyond, TVET professionals and university professors, researchers studying educational policies and practices, school leaders and administrative personnel in the field of education.

The working language of the conference and supporting documents is English. Teachers may present the videos in their native language (hold a class in their language of instruction different from English), in this case English subtitles are strongly recommended.

**PROGRAMME:**
CONNECT 2.0 will include the following activities:

- **a) Pre-conference competition for school teachers from SCO countries (October 30 – November 25, 2023):**
The teachers are requested to record videos to participate in one (or more) of the four nominations illustrating how they make use of information and communication technologies and AI tools while
fostering certain sets of skills in their pupils. Please note that participation is individual, that is, a group of teachers cannot record one video. The nominations are:

1) Digital Teaching and Learning to Advance Green Society
2) Skills to Ensure Equality and Better Inclusion in Education
3) Facilitating Digital Economy Skills Development in Schools
4) The Role of ICT in Developing Leadership Skills

The competition will be judged by a jury, consisting of representatives of HEDU, UNESCO IITE, Europass Teacher Academy, and other organizations. The award ceremony will take place during the SCO CONNECT 2.0 Forum on the second day of the conference.

The prizes include a week-long study trip to Europe (courtesy of Europass Teacher Academy) in the beginning of 2024, and prizes from the sponsor, Huashi Education Group; all the participants will get the certificates of participation in the pre-conference competition signed by UNESCO IITE and HEDU.

The technical and other requirements for the videos are available below, on pp. 6-7. Please send the videos to Ms. Tatiana SHUTOVA at t.shutova@unesco.org (by November 25 inclusive)

b) Online CONNECT 2.0 conference (December 12 – 13, 2023)

The conference programme focuses on different audiences.

December 12: the programme will be open to participants from around the world and will feature keynotes, panel discussions and workshops dedicated to practical ways of developing the four sets of skills with the discussion to follow. Speakers TBA; the conference programme is to be published in late November at https://iite.unesco.org/announcements/invitation-to-the-connect-2-o-international-online-conference-december-12-2023/

December 13: will be dedicated to a SCO CONNECT 2.0 Forum focusing on the skills development, teaching and learning in China, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan. The agenda will include the award ceremony of the pre-conference competition and an overview of skills development across SCO countries. Additionally, a number of round table discussions will be arranged which will cover the following topics:

- Digital and online educational environment: the advantages are obvious but what are the challenges?
- Digital skills: what are the ways to improve the knowledge about specialized software among teachers and learners?
- Missed opportunities: how to more fully use the educational potential of everyday digital environments?


*If you are interested in contributing to the round table discussion as a speaker, please contact Ms. Tatiana SHUTOVA (t.shutova@unesco.org) by 25 November indicating the specific round table topic you would like to discuss in depth.
THE KEYNOTE SPEAKERS, EXPERTS, AND THE PARTICIPANTS WILL ADDRESS THE FOLLOWING SCOPE OF ISSUES:

- Practical incorporation of skills development and making it central to teaching a diverse set of subjects;
- The ethics of using AI for teaching and learning: turning the perceived threat into an opportunity;
- Reconsideration and redesign of national and regional curricula to include an intense skills development component as an integral part of subject teaching.

THE CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS WILL ELABORATE ON THE KEY ACTIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS TO TAKE, INCLUDING:

1. Identifying and prioritizing the most pressing region-specific challenges regarding the access to and use of ICTs and AI by educators for teaching, learning, and for professional development;
2. Including and highlighting needs of the most deprived teachers in regional and national strategic policies and plans;
3. Promoting more sufficient investment in and need for digital literacy for educators;
4. Building national capacities to encourage equipping educators with ICT/AI skills for delivering quality education to ensure cooperation in digital transformation, boost in digital literacy for active citizenship and civil engagement of citizens and fuller realization of human capital;
5. Taking an effort to communicate the opportunities brought about by new AI technologies as opposed to threats to the profession of an educator.

TIMELINE AND OUTLINE OF THE PRE-CONFERENCE STAGE:

The programme of the event will include the pre-conference stage and the CONNECT 2.0 conference itself. Below is the outline of the Pre-conference stage (please note the deadline has been extended till November 25 inclusive):

Each Member State of the SCO invites its most advanced schools to the competition by **October 30, 2023**.

UNESCO IITE and Huashi Education Group hold an introductory webinar for teachers and schools representatives on **November 7, 2023**. Teachers from all the schools discuss how information and communication technology inspires and becomes instrumental for the development of 21st century skills, soft and hard skills alike, as well as for more engaging and fun learning. They may also present the preliminary ideas for the videos. The registration link is [https://unesco-org.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUude6qqTguGNBJTpzTHvzOnfitLayxVxRZ#/registration](https://unesco-org.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUude6qqTguGNBJTpzTHvzOnfitLayxVxRZ#/registration)

Teacher OR teachers of each school produce one video in the selected nomination(s) with the support of UNESCO IITE, HEDU Group or other schools by **November 19, 2023**. Nominations:

1) Digital Teaching and Learning to Advance Green Society
2) Skills to Ensure Equality and Better Inclusion in Education
3) Facilitating Digital Economy Skills Development in Schools
4) The Role of ICT in Developing Leadership Skills

Selection of the best 4 videos by the panel of specialists by **November 30, 2023**.
EVALUATION CRITERIA AND TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS:

The videos for the competition should demonstrate how teacher(s) in a particular school develop ONE of the four skill sets mentioned earlier as part of teaching their subject(s). One prerequisite is that the skill development should be enhanced / mediated by use of various information and communication technologies tools and / or AI tools. The participation is individual, that is, one teacher records one video per nomination.

The format of videos: MPEG-4/H.264. Video recording should be carried out with a maximum level of quality, in full HD 1080p (minimum) or UHD 4K.

Length: 5 to 10 minutes

The videos should necessarily include, in no particular order:

- introduction about the school (country, type of school);
- brief description of the project about ICT in education;
- the results of the project and how it has enhanced learning;
- the description of the project’s impact

The jury will judge the videos against the following set of criteria:

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**CONTACT INFORMATION**

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**Conference registration links:**

Day 1. INTERNATIONAL:
https://unesco.org.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZIucu2orj8oHNYhYHN5G879n5ZjuYmD7HWD#/registration

Day 2: SCO COUNTRIES:
https://unesco.org.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZEtdOiqqTooHNx19FEK6oMNKwWmJoK7F_et#/registration

**REFERENCES AND INSIGHTFUL RESOURCES**


[6] https://online.hbs.edu/blog/post/sustainability-skills