Online conference

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

“Developing Key Skills for the 21st Century”

12 December 2023

Join the Webinar:

Registration Link

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.

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
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. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, many educators were forced to creatively approach the educational process including with the implementation of various ICT tools (both in order to ensure that the learning is taking place and to track progress of the learners) while simultaneously trying to keep ‘digital balance’ not to overburden the learners (and themselves) with too many applications and constant online presence. That rapid ‘technologization’ of the educational processes additionally illuminated the long-recognized need for, and accelerated digital transformation in education: globally, educators, students, policymakers, and other stakeholders still continue actively undertaking efforts to bring about digital transformation in this sector.

The on-going digital transformation of education corresponds with UNESCO 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]).

As Part of UNESCO Strategy on Technological Innovation and Education (2022-2025), in addition to capacity building, the Organization seeks to develop standard-setting instruments and normative tools, including guidelines and frameworks, ‘to strengthen the digital competencies (understanding, skills, and values) of teachers and learners and ensure a human-right-based, safe, ethical, and meaningful use of technologies in a lifelong learning perspective ([2], quoted in [1]).

What follows is that on the one hand, there is a need to update the sets of skills taught at schools to prepare schoolchildren for the constantly evolving societal and technological changes, and on the other hand, to make use of technologies along the way, so that digital competencies become not only the end result but also a means to ensure lifelong learning and prosperous future. 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; specifically, it was reflected in the 2022 UNESCO publication "K-12 AI curricula: A mapping of government-endorsed AI curricula" [1].

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”) 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. The one-day conference provides the worldwide community of educators with an opportunity 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 encourage the exchange of information and practices of teaching particular skills within a diverse range of school subjects with the use of digital technologies;
- to inspire networking and development of network projects between and among schools and different countries;
- to stimulate discussions about and offer practical solutions to the need to reconsider national and regional curricula and to recognize the definitive role of ICTs and emerging AI tools in developing many of the hard and soft skills of the future;
- to discuss the implications of the rapid evolvement of generative tools (like ChatGPT) on the professional (self-)identification and ways to make them perceived as an effective instrument rather than an existential threat.

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.

PROGRAMME:

CONNECT 2.0 will focus on the topics pertaining to the development of the following skillsets in modern schoolchildren to ensure prospering in the 21st century:

- Green Skills
- Skills to Ensure Equality and Inclusion
- Digital Economy Skills
- Leadership Skills,
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 mid-November.

**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. Bridging the digital divide and reducing technological barriers by investing into digital infrastructure and connectivity;
4. Promoting more sufficient investment in digital literacy for educators;
5. Building national capacities to encourage equipping educators with ICT/AI skills for delivering quality education;
6. Facilitating civic engagement, encouraging and actualizing communication and consultation with major stakeholder groups (including in local languages) to duly consider and meet the needs of educators in terms of developing their ICT skills and competencies, including in-house training and support, to be able to provide quality education and ensure skills development;
7. Supporting teachers, school staff and entire education communities to become better prepared and motivated to ensure equitable and inclusive education services in and outside classrooms;
8. Taking an effort to communicate the opportunities brought about by new AI technologies as opposed to threats to the profession of an educator.

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

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**REFERENCES AND INSIGHTFUL RESOURCES**


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