Concept Note

AI Shaping Sexuality Education: Practices and Perspectives

Background

Comprehensive sexual education is an essential component of growing up, providing young people with the knowledge, skills, and mindset they need to make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health. Yet, numerous young individuals lack access to accurate and reliable information about sexuality. Conventional approaches to sexual education, whether through schools, communities, or families, might not effectively reach diverse populations.

Recent advances in generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) development offer new opportunities for delivering personalized, interactive, and engaging sexuality education programmes that can reach young people where they are – online and on their mobile devices. An invaluable advantage of AI-driven platforms in sexuality education lies in offering anonymity and privacy. Many individuals feel uneasy discussing sensitive sexual health topics, potentially resulting in misconceptions or a lack of understanding. AI-powered tools possibly alleviate this by creating a safe, non-judgmental space where users can ask questions and receive accurate information without fear of embarrassment or stigma.

AI-driven tools are accessible across various devices, serving as a convenient and reachable resource, especially for those in remote or underserved communities lacking sexuality education. By leveraging AI-driven platforms, individuals, irrespective of their location or background, might gain access to accurate and updated information. Furthermore, platforms, driven by AI, continually learn and enhance themselves with each user interaction. This iterative process allows these platforms to stay current with the latest research and data, offering users the most reliable information available.

Despite the potential advantages, it’s crucial to acknowledge the associated risks and challenges of implementing AI-driven sexuality education. Ensuring the accuracy and reliability of information provided by these platforms is paramount, as misinformation could severely impact an individual’s health. Privacy concerns also demand attention to safeguard users’ sensitive information and maintain platform trust. Moreover, AI-driven tools, reflecting the data they are trained on, carry the risk of perpetuating societal biases concerning gender and sexuality or stigmatizing these topics, potentially turning them taboo. Particularly, AI chatbots trained with online content pose a risk of amplifying mainstream discourses or conveying inaccurate information.

The rapid evolution of AI technology has led to the emergence of new tools and educational platforms for children and adolescents, offering information and counseling on issues related to growing up, puberty, sexuality, health, and relationships. Given the swift emergence of educational and awareness raising tools, it’s essential to analyze practical experience to identify good practices and potential risks, and benefit from synergies and shared experiences. This approach allows the creation of tools that immediately incorporate key recommendations, ethical principles, and the insights gained from others’ experiences.
Key objectives

The objective of the project is to develop a comprehensive review of good practices in the use of AI for sexuality education and awareness raising. The review will provide guidance for educators, health professionals, tech companies and others who are interested in using AI to promote sexual health and well-being among young people. The review will cover a range of topics, including case studies of successful AI-based programs, ethical considerations, technical advice, best practices, and future directions.

Topics to be covered in the review:

1. Introduction: What is sexuality, health and well-being education? What are possible benefits of using AI for sexuality education?
2. Case studies: AI-based sexuality education programmes, including chat bots, apps, and digital tools, their target audience, content covered, and achieved outcomes.
3. Discussion on ethical considerations involving AI in sexuality education, focusing on privacy, data security, and consent.
4. Analysis of the current and evolving legal frameworks governing AI’s application in sexuality education, addressing any existing gaps or areas requiring further regulation.
5. Strategies to ensure inclusivity and accessibility in AI-based programs, specifically for individuals with disabilities and from marginalized communities.
6. Exploration of the psychological and emotional implications of AI in sensitive educational contexts, emphasizing strategies for ensuring positive impacts.
7. Technical considerations for designing effective AI-based sexuality education tools and programmes, such as user interface design, natural language processing, machine learning, and challenges associated with multi-language models.
8. Best practices for employing AI in sexuality education, encompassing recommendations for content development, user engagement strategies, and evaluation techniques.
9. Investigation of emerging trends and future directions in AI-based sexuality education, such as virtual reality, augmented reality, and immersive technologies.
10. Key insights and the potential transformative impact of AI on sexuality education.

The review will be conducted through a combination of desk research, expert and practitioners’ consultations. The desk research will involve a systematic review of the literature on AI-based sexuality, health and well-being education programmes, as well as an analysis of existing guidelines and standards related to ethics and data privacy. The expert consultations will involve interviews with leading experts in the fields of sexuality education, AI, and digital health. The review will be framed as a web-based project and will encompass a compilation of materials in various formats (interviews, narratives, storytelling, FAQs, etc.), ensuring a comprehensive exploration of the subject matter.

Expected outcomes

The review will provide practical guidance for educators, health professionals, tech companies, and others who are interested in using AI to promote sexual health and well-being among young people. The review will highlight best practices in content development, user engagement, and evaluation, as well as ethical considerations related to privacy and data security. The review will also identify emerging trends and future directions in AI-based sexuality education, such as the potential for virtual reality and other immersive technologies.
Terms of Reference

Individual Consultancy: Review Editor & Content Writer - AI-Based Sexuality Education

Overall goal: The Editor & Content Writer's will define the structure of a comprehensive review of AI-driven sexuality education; conceptualize the review as a multimedia web-based project, while determining various formats (interviews, narratives, storytelling, explainers, FAQs, etc.); curate materials; provide multimedia content recommendations (AI-generated animation, images, infographics) to supplement review materials; formulate interview questions; and write materials in a journalistic or popular science writing style.

Based on specific guidance by UNESCO, and working closely with the responsible team of the UNESCO IITE, the contractor's tasks include to:

1. Conceptualizing the Review:
   a. Participate in a virtual kick-off meeting with UNESCO staff and the researcher to define parameters for the review, including the identification of potential topics and sections, formats, interaction modalities within the project team, and submission timelines.
   b. Propose recommendations for the desk review and expert interview phases, aligning them with the review's overall vision.
   c. Based on UNESCO IITE's provided background information on thematic areas and recommendations on key topics, develop a detailed concept plan for the multimedia web-based project. The detailed concept plan for the multimedia web-based project should encompass:
      i. A detailed list of suggested themes, topics and questions to be covered in the multimedia platform materials;
      ii. A list of at least 10 key content items (materials) to be developed and published on the web resource, along with suggested formats (e.g. storytelling, interviews, narratives, interactive longreads, explainers, FAQs, etc.);
      iii. Recommendations on formatting concise descriptions of AI tools and platforms aimed at sexuality education, gender awareness, relationships, HIV prevention, and related subjects for children and young people;
      iv. Suggestions for the overall visual style to be employed in developing the web-based platform;
      v. Project timeframe details.
   d. Ensure the detailed concept plan of the web resource aligns with the needs of its target audiences (educators, health professionals, tech companies, etc.) and is in line with the key thematic areas identified by UNESCO IITE. Provide recommendations on the visual style reflecting current design trends and integrating content generated by artificial intelligence.
   e. Submit the detailed concept plan to UNESCO IITE and incorporate necessary corrections based on feedback from UNESCO IITE and research team members.

2. Guiding Research Phase:
   a. Offer recommendations on the guiding questions for discussions with experts specializing in AI application within sexuality education, psychological counseling, service delivery to young people, gender studies, HIV prevention, and related subjects.
   b. If necessary, participate in conducting expert interviews or gathering information in alternative formats (e.g., written responses, concise comments on topics) alongside the researcher and UNESCO IITE staff.
   c. Review notes taken during expert interviews and the accompanying analysis to integrate them into key content items and supplementary multimedia materials.
   d. Based on input from the researcher and UNESCO IITE, finalize guiding questions for interviews with representatives (developers, content creators, educators, etc.) of existing tools and platforms using AI
technologies in sexuality education, gender awareness, relationships, HIV prevention, and related subjects for children and young people.

e. Collaborate with UNESCO IITE and the project’s researcher to identify up to 15 cases for further exploration.

3. Curating and Crafting Key Materials:
   a. Revise the detailed concept plan of the multimedia web-based project based on the gathered research materials.
   b. Curate additional information to create and draft a minimum of 10 content items (materials) to be included into the overall review. Contact experts and representatives of AI tools and platforms, if needed, to gather additional comments.
   c. Develop at least 10 key content items in journalistic or popular science writing style, incorporating storytelling, interviews, concise reviews, FAQs, explainers, and other engaging formats (10 items * 2-4 pages / ~320 words per page). Ensure the content maintains clarity, aligns with journalistic standards, and effectively communicates critical insights.
   d. Submit draft content items to UNESCO IITE and engage in an iterative refinement and verification process with the collaboration of UNESCO IITE, the project researcher, and the expert team. Go through two iterations to finalize the content items.
   e. Rewrite draft descriptions of a minimum of 10 AI tools and platforms cases (10*1 page/~320 words per page), previously developed by the project researcher, in a journalistic or popular science writing style. Ensure the overall style is consistent with the review, easy to comprehend, engaging, compelling, and clear.
   f. Submit the final content items and the revised descriptions of 10 cases to UNESCO IITE.

4. Curating Multimedia Content and Visualization
   a. Offer suggestions regarding the content, format, and visualization of supplementary multimedia materials (images, AI-generated animations, infographics, podcasts, etc.) to complement the key content items. After receiving approval from UNESCO IITE, finalize these recommendations.
   b. Collaborate with the project’s web designer, graphic designer, and AI illustrator/animator to ensure the production of high-quality multimedia content that complements the project.
   c. Upon the development of the web-platform, work closely with UNESCO IITE, the project’s graphic designer, and AI illustrator/animator to ensure accurate publication of all content items and multimedia materials, aligning with the initial concept plan.

The contractor will submit the following deliverables:

1. A detailed concept plan of the multimedia web-based project - review. This detailed concept should encompass:
   a. A detailed list of suggested themes, topics and questions to be covered in the multimedia platform materials;
   b. A list of at least 10 key content items (materials) to be developed and published on the web resource, along with suggested formats (e.g. storytelling, interviews, narratives, interactive longreads, explainers, FAQs, etc.);
   c. Recommendations on formatting concise descriptions of AI tools and platforms aimed at sexuality education, gender awareness, relationships, HIV prevention, and related subjects for children and young people;
   d. Suggestions for the overall visual style to be employed in developing the web-based platform;
   e. Project timeframe details.
2. Recommendations for guiding questions to be addressed in discussions with experts in utilizing AI for sexuality education.

3. Finalized guiding questions for interviews with representatives (developers, content creators, educators, etc.) of existing AI-driven tools and platforms in sexuality education.

4. A minimum of 10 key content items (materials) presented in a journalistic or popular science writing style. These will include storytelling, interviews, concise reviews, FAQs, explainers, and other engaging formats (10 items * 2-4 pages / ~320 words per page).

5. Finalized descriptions of at least 10 cases of AI tools and platforms (10*1 page/~320 words per page).

6. Recommendations concerning the content, format, and visualization of supplementary multimedia materials (images, AI-generated animations, infographics, podcasts, etc.) to complement the key content items.

Timeline:
The overall work under the assignment is scheduled to take place from February to June 2024.

Contractor profile:
Experience:
  a. At least 5-year experience in developing publications and articles in journalistic formats for digital media is required;
  b. Demonstrated ability to create informative content using diverse engagement techniques and formats such as storytelling, interviews, FAQs, and explainers;
  c. Proven track record in curating complex digital media projects;
  d. Experience in curating multimedia content, including illustrations and animations, to complement textual materials;
  e. Strong research and analytical skills for identifying key materials and structuring comprehensive reviews effectively;

Education:
  a. Advanced degree in Journalism, Communications, Social Sciences, or a related field;
  b. Additional qualifications in Education or Technology are advantageous.

Knowledge:
  a. Proficiency in AI technologies;
  b. Familiarity with educational agendas, particularly in the context of adolescent and youth learning, sexuality education, or related domains is desirable.

Skills:
  a. Exceptional written and verbal communication skills in English are essential;
  b. Cultural sensitivity and the ability to engage respectfully with diverse stakeholders;
  c. Dedication to upholding ethical standards in journalism, ensuring privacy and data security at all project stages;
  d. Adherence to ethical research practices and principles for privacy and data security;
  e. Collaborative abilities to work effectively with UNESCO staff and various stakeholders in executing research.

Languages:
  a. Fluent written and oral proficiency in English is mandatory.
  b. Proficiency in at least one other official UN language (Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian, or Spanish) is considered an asset.
Qualified candidates are encouraged to submit their applications to v.plakhutina@unesco.org by February 4, 2024 (deadline extended).

The application should consist of the following documents:

- Candidate’s Curriculum Vitae, indicating education and professional background;
- Portfolio: Collection of links and/or screenshots to the articles, digital media materials and projects, developed previously;
- A concise statement illustrating how the candidate’s qualifications and experience align with the requirements of the assignment;
- Anticipated remuneration: A clear breakdown of the anticipated expenses related to the assignment.