COMMITTEE : Digital Inclusion

ISSUE : How can States integrate digital technologies into education while ensuring the digital inclusion of all students?

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PRESIDENT



Hello dear delegates! My name is Mazen Kanani and I will be one of your presidents in the Digital Inclusion committee for this FerMUN 2027 conference. I am 17 years old and in the ENP section at the Lycée International de Ferney-Voltaire. I am Canadian, Sudanese and Mexican. Due to my parents' work I've lived across the world in countries including Jordan, Bangladesh and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The experience of living in these countries has taught me how to keep an open mind and has ultimately served as a reminder of how fortunate some of us really are. I practice swimming in a club and I've been playing the piano for 10 years! I love running and rock climbing in my free time.

This year our committee will be focused on issues regarding digital inclusion, more specifically in the education sector and how digital technologies can be integrated into education by countries.

In our day and age, technology is reshaping a large number of aspects in our lives and this is seen notably in the sector of education. Technology is bringing new services and new skills to master (coding, app development, data analysis). This is why more and more jobs require these digital skills and digital knowledge in order to perform. Therefore, digital tools are necessary in education to allow the youth to obtain decent work and economic opportunities in the age of digital transformation.

I sincerely hope that this research report will allow you to further understand this topic and aid you in your research regarding your assigned country. I look forward to seeing you all in January at the International Telecommunication Union (ITU)!

KEY WORDS

The United Nations (UN) is the sole source of all of the following definitions below

Digital inclusion : The UN[1] defines digital inclusion as equitable, meaningful, and safe access to use, lead, and design of digital technologies, services, and associated opportunities for everyone, everywhere.

Digitalization : The adaptation of a system, process, etc. to be operated with the use of computers and the Internet.

Digital Literacy : The confident and critical use of a full range of digital technologies for information, communication and basic problem-solving in all aspects of life.

Cybersecurity : The collection of tools, policies, security concepts, security safeguards, guidelines, risk management approaches, actions, training, best practices, assurance and technologies that can be used to protect the cyber environment and organization and user's assets.

Digital skills : A range of abilities to use digital devices, communication applications, and networks to access and manage information.

Office of Information and Communications Technology (OICT) : This office provides oversight of ICT programmes, systems, applications and decision-making. This office is committed to ensuring colleagues all over the world have the necessary ICT tools to succeed in their respective mandates.

Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) : Shared digital systems that are secure and interoperable and that can support the inclusive delivery of and access to public and private services across society.

Digital Divide : The gap between those who can effectively use information and communication tools, such as the Internet, and those who cannot.

[1] United Nations Department for General Assembly and Conference Management - The United Nations Terminology Database. Available at : https://unterm.un.org/unterm2/en/about (accessed 07/07/2026)

OVERVIEW

Why is the digital divide crucial ?

The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 was a period where learning switched almost instantly from paper to screen, serving to highlight the importance of digital learning. However, the disparity in technology access for learning and communication is ever-present which is why the digital divide has resurfaced as a critical issue since COVID but has been widening since many years before. Over time, this gap results in students struggling to complete tasks such as submitting digital assignments or conducting online research. This issue is essential to address as it can impact future employment and impact the full exercise of one's rights and opportunities in society.[2]

According to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU)[3]87% of young people have an Internet connection at home in high-income countries, but in low-income countries, just 6% do. This gap in technology access is a large triggering factor to social inequalities.

The digital divide can hinder a family's participation in society as well as limit their social and economic capital. In most middle to high-income countries, digital literacy and competencies are essential to obtaining employment. Additionally, a 2020 report from UNICEF[4] shows that, globally and among school-age children from the richest households, 58% have an Internet connection at home, compared to only 16% from the poorest households. More often than not, a child's Internet access is linked to their parents' standard of living.

For example, in many countries registering a SIM card requires identification documents, which excludes many refugees simply because they sometimes no longer have access to their legal identification papers. Initiatives such as Connectivity for Refugees[5], led jointly by the ITU, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), and the GSM Association (GSMA) note that, in a lot

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[2] UNICEF - **How many children and young people have internet access at home?** Estimating digital connectivity during the COVID-19 pandemic. Available at : https://data.unicef.org/resources/children-and-young-people-internet-access-at-home-during-covid19/ (Published in December 2020)

[3] International Telecommunication Union - Thematic Backgrounder : Digital Inclusion of youth. Available at : https://www.itu.int/en/mediacentre/backgrounders/Pages/digital-inclusion-of-youth.aspx (accessed 07/07/2026)

[4] United Nations and International Telecommunications Union - HOW MANY CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE INTERNET ACCESS AT HOME? Available at:https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/publications/UNICEF/How-many-children-and-young-people-have-internet-access-at-home-2020_v2final.pdf (Published in December 2020)

[5] Connectivity for Refugees - Home page. Available at : https://refugeeconnectivity.org/

of cases, a large majority of displaced families are left with difficult choices to make: paying for data or paying for basic needs like food, water and essential school supplies. Therefore, in some countries affected by natural or human-made disasters, digital tools are not always a priority because these countries' populations struggle to first meet their basic needs for survival.[6]

How does it impact education ?

The 2023 UNESCO Global Education Monitoring report[7] explored the theme of *Technology in education: A tool on whose terms?* ; the report delved more specifically into the implementation of technology in education and its efficiency on different levels.

The barchart on the following page in UNESCO's report highlights the unequal access to digital resources across the world. With an average of about 0.8 computers per student, considerable differences are observable across countries.

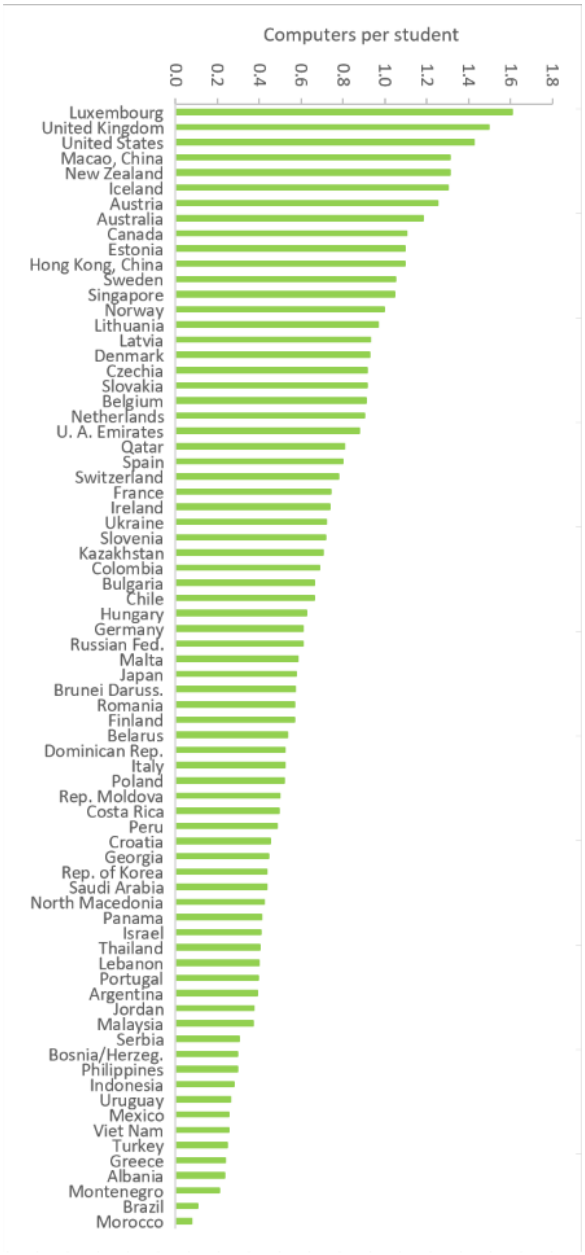
In countries such as Morocco and Brazil, virtually no computers are available to students, hindering their access to wider sources of learning.

In the United Kingdom and Luxembourg however, the number of computers per student has practically doubled, and therefore more online educational resources are available to students.

Students in countries with greater access to digital resources have greater opportunities to develop digital skills necessary for jobs, access online educational resources as well as participate in technology-based lessons.

On the contrary, students in countries with less access to digital resources may struggle to implement online learning. In addition, these students may be disadvantaged in the labour market due to their limited opportunities to develop digital skills. What this chart does not highlight are the underlying realities of children in low resource environments who might have to share a mobile or where the internet connection is limited or poor. Also teachers in low resource countries might not be trained on how to use computers or how to support children to access the internet.

[6] United Nations - Connecting Refugees: Why Digital Inclusion Cannot Be Left Behind. (Published December 9 2025)
[7] UNESCO - Global Education Monitoring Report 2023, Technology in education : A Tool On Whose Terms? Available at : https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000385723/PDF/385723eng.pdf.multi



Source : *The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2020)*

The Digital Divide in Countries affected by conflict and emergencies

Conflict deepens the digital divide in ways that go beyond the usual global gaps in access. Even where internet access technically exists, it is rarely equally usable, and those already facing the most disadvantage, women, refugees, rural communities, tend to be excluded further still.

RELEVANT UN TREATIES AND EVENTS

14/12/1960

Convention against Discrimination in Education

This convention was adopted in order to guarantee equal educational opportunities and to eliminate discrimination, especially in the digital age.

20/11/1989

Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN)

Article 28 of this UN adopted convention evokes the importance of States' contribution to the elimination of ignorance and illiteracy throughout the world and the facilitation of access to scientific and technical knowledge and modern teaching methods.

12/12/2006

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Article 24 of this convention raises the issue of inclusion of disabled persons in education by pushing States to ensure an inclusive education system at all levels.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

I) Provide affordable access to digital devices

A major cause of the digital divide is the affordability crisis of digital devices. By subsidising these devices such as computers and tablets, notably for economically disadvantaged students, States could ensure an equitable opportunity for learning. Corporate companies could also provide subscriptions to relevant applications such as Microsoft, at reduced prices or for free so they can be used.

Additionally, States could encourage the recycling and refurbishment of their electronic devices. This could be accomplished by governments establishing programmes to collect, refurbish and redistribute used digital devices lowering the amount of electronic waste produced.

However, technology should be used as a *tool* for learning only, and in no way should it completely replace a teacher, particularly for young students. Recently Finland, a country that had propelled its digitalisation agenda forward ten years ago, has recently reassessed this approach after decreasing learning outcome assessment results (PISA) and concerns from neuropsychologists regarding children's concentration, sleep, and rising anxiety linked to heavy screen use**.** Thus even one of the world's most digitally advanced education systems is reassessing the assumption that more technology automatically produces better learning outcomes.

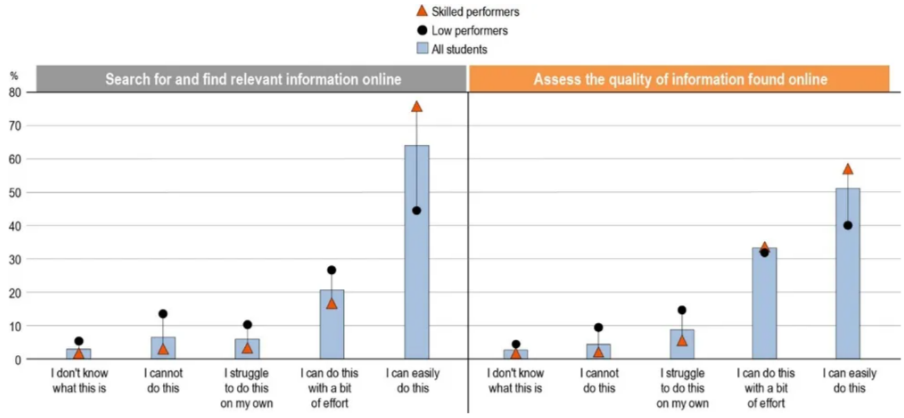
II) Improve digital literacy

In order for youth to obtain decent work opportunities in the future job market, digital skills are necessary and can only be acquired with a certain level of digital literacy. Professional development for teachers on using technology as a tool for learning purposes should be ensured as well so that teachers can integrate technology into their classroom practice, best support students to use devices and to use the internet safely.

The OECD published the graph below measuring students' self-efficacy in digital competencies in which less than 50% of low-skilled performers reported they could easily search for and find relevant information online as well as assess the quality of information found online.

Therefore, States could integrate digital literacy into their own national education systems allowing students to develop skills at a younger age. It is also imperative for young people to be able to protect themselves in the digital world which is why education curricula in countries could teach students cybersecurity and online safety.

This solution could not only encourage a responsible use of the Internet but also build confidence in using digital technologies.



Source: *The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) PISA 2022 Database*

III) Education System strengthening in lower income countries to improve global equitable digital access and inclusion

Digital inclusion and bridging the digital divide cannot be addressed in a siloed approach, particularly in lower income countries still struggling to finance the basics of a functioning education system including teacher salaries, construction of a sufficient number of classrooms and latrines, and ensuring teachers are trained. This is particularly true in countries where families struggle to meet basic needs including food, shelter and safety due to constant displacement as a result of armed conflict such as in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Providing sustained, multi-year aid and investment from higher-income countries to help Ministries of Education in lower income countries to strengthen their own education systems and address challenges including but not limited to digital inclusion, is a much more sustainable approach rather than only funding short-term digital education projects that end when funding expires and are not sustainable in the long term.

GUIDED QUESTIONS

- How can digital education reach refugee or displaced students?
- How can governments provide reliable internet access to remote communities?
- How can digital tools better support learners with disabilities?
- How can digital education remain inclusive during emergencies such as pandemics or natural disasters?
- What barriers prevent students from benefiting from digital education?
- How can technology reduce educational inequalities rather than reinforce them?

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