

Resolution 1: The role of education technology in education

1. There has been a considerable growth in the use of technology in education and learning programmes across the international education community and in most domestic education systems led by national governments. The introduction of education technology (EdTech) was especially accelerated during the Covid-19 pandemic to provide digital learning opportunities whilst schools, educational institutions and other places of learning were closed.
2. Learning outcomes and learner's well-being in relation to the use of EdTech has so far provided mixed evidence which highlights both opportunities and challenges, especially related to digital education during the Covid-19 pandemic. A key issue is that access is not equal and the risk is that unequal access will perpetuate and increase educational disadvantage for intersectional groups. The rapid spread and increase of EdTech programmes have also led to broader discussions about the future of education and ultimately learners, both children and young people and adults' rights. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) from 1989 acknowledges that every human being has the right to quality education and life-long learning opportunities
3. The digital environment also poses the risk of violation or abuse of children's, young people adults and other vulnerable groups' rights. A 2022 report from Human Rights Watch¹ found that government's endorsement of online learning platforms put at risk or directly violated children's privacy in 49 countries during the pandemic. We know that children online report encountering a range of risks online ranging from content risks to contact risk including unwanted sexual attention. Children frequently report being exposed to age-inappropriate and potentially harmful content online, relating to self-harm, violence, or drug-related content. Another challenge is that children report that adults, both parents and teachers, provide little guidance or mediation to children in their internet use, leaving children to largely figure out their way online by themselves and with the help of friends².
4. An increasing number of governments have addressed how to include EdTech in their public education systems, a development accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic. **With the increased use of technology, we are also faced with a risk of Covid-19 responses in education being a facilitator of long-term privatisation of core components of education service delivery.** Many EdTech providers are non-state actors working within the education sector in a given context.³ Many of these companies utilise business models that sell EdTech solutions without an open-source license⁴ directly to schools, other learning institutions, students, learners and parents. This

¹ <https://www.hrw.org/report/2022/05/25/how-dare-they-peep-my-private-life/childrens-rights-violations-governments>

² <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/zambia-kids-online-a-global-kids-online-study/>

³ https://en.unesco.org/gem-report/non-state_actors

⁴ Open source licenses are licenses that comply with the Open Source Definition, which entails free use, modification and sharing of software. <https://opensource.org/osd-annotated>

extends beyond licensing but does pose challenges related to the protection of education as a human right and public good for education systems across the world. As the UN Special Rapporteur⁵ has pointed out, the digital transformation of education has shown a troubling correlation with the privatization of education and private governance of user's data and online practices. Through the digitization of education, we potentially run the future risk of fragmenting the right to education and the commitment of free inclusive quality education.

5. It is also important to involve teachers and other educators in the design and use of EdTech as their opinions and perspectives matter when it comes to their effective use. Evidence clearly demonstrates that teachers and effective pedagogy are the most important factors influencing learner's achievement⁶. **The digitization of education should not replace onsite learning with teachers and educators, as face-to-face education enables teachers and educators not only to provide content, but also ensures it is understood and well received by the learners⁷.** Moreover, education is not only about the academic lessons delivered. In-person schooling helps child development by building their social emotional skills, their relationships with peers and interact with broader society. **Teachers and educators are a priority stakeholder and interventions must be planned which recognize them as key implementing partners, targeting their training and delivery needs⁸.**

GCE World Assembly urges global and national policymakers to:

1. Invest in free, effective, flexible, equitable and inclusive multi-model learning programmes when learning institutions are closed or as a national integrated preparedness plan to secure children's learning and wellbeing in future crises.
2. Promote learners' agency and actively include their voices in EdTech design and use.
3. Listen, reflect and engage with learners', teachers and educators when designing and implementing EdTech programmes.
4. Actively implement General Comment No. 25, and all rights encompassed in it.
5. Promote a digital transformation starting from the internet idea as a human right and that guarantees:
 - a) free and permanent universal access to broadband internet, thus by closing the digital gap that segregates and excludes a broad segment of student sectors;
 - b) free provision of computers and mobile connection devices to students and teachers;

⁵ <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G22/322/37/PDF/G2232237.pdf?OpenElement>

⁶ https://www.epi.org/publication/books_teacher_quality_execsum_intro/

⁷ https://www.ohchr.org/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session44/Documents/A_HRC_44_39.docx

⁸ https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/teachers_stronger_education_systems_2022.pdf/

- c) sovereign cloud architecture dependent on each country, with free access keys for students and teachers at all levels of the education systems;
- d) own taxonomy for the design of educational platforms based on critical thinking and creativity;
- e) to not transfer public resources, intended for public education, to transnational digital corporations;
- f) the promotion of a critical literacy process, at all levels and in all educational sectors, about the virtual environment, its risks and also its possibilities, such as the promotion of collaborative resources and content, with open codes.