United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development

Draft Vizag Declaration on Guidelines for Digital Learning
for adoption at the Transforming Education for Humanity Conference,
Vishakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, India, 15-17 November 2018

We, the participants of the UNESCO MGIEP Transforming Education Conference for Humanity (TECH) 2018 on digital pedagogies, meeting in Vishakhapatnam, India, from 15 to 17 November 2018, adopt this Declaration and call for urgent action by all relevant stakeholders to ensure quality digital learning, in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its accompanying set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We:

I
Reaffirm the critical importance of SDG 4 to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" and in particular Target 4.7 on "knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development" in fostering peaceful and sustainable societies and advancing well-being for all,

II
Acknowledge the immense, largely untapped potential of fast-moving digital technologies to advance individual and collective learning and to improve overall learning outcomes by positively transforming ourselves and how we relate to each other and the planet we all share,

III
Recognize that the unintended and negative impacts of digital products and services—which include tech addiction, e-waste, selective access, and the digital divide based on gender, geographical location, and socio-economic status—disproportionately impact younger generations and require more research to identify the most promising uses of technologies in learning,

IV
Encourage all efforts to provide quality digital learning tools, services, new and improved learning environments and pedagogies, through a collective commitment by all stakeholders,

V: Present Education Systems
Underscore the emerging international consensus around the need to rethink education based on the acknowledgement that:

1. The world is changing at a brisk pace and education systems need to prepare learners and educators for both the changes and the challenges of the 21st century;
2. Currently, dominant models of education and teaching-learning are not informed by the emerging science of neural learning nor are they equipped to keep pace with global technological revolutions impacting society and learner capabilities;
3. Expanding digital ecosystems are creating continuous and unprecedented refractory societal challenges, which require that generations of today and tomorrow develop new forms of digital literacy; and
4. Educating a 'whole person' is critical not only for adapting successfully to rapid changes in the increasingly interconnected and interdependent world, but also for advancing well-being for all, by fostering social and emotional skills, intercultural dialogue, respect for cultural diversity, systems thinking, and integrated problem-solving competencies, among others;

VI: Digital Pedagogies
Embrace the potential of digital pedagogies—the skillful, artful and mindful fusion of digital learning solutions with digital delivery systems for establishing new pedagogical approaches and enhancing the effectiveness of existing ones—based on the understanding that:

1. Digital learning systems encompass all software and online platforms, including digital tools, services, and media designed and developed for teaching-learning purposes, which may incorporate applications, games, artificial intelligence (AI), augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR) and mixed reality (MR) content, among others;
2. Digital learning systems may establish a new dimension in achieving SDG 4—ensuring inclusive and quality education and enhancing lifelong learning opportunities for all. They may:

(1) increase the accessibility and availability of quality learning resources around the world, thereby expanding the toolkit of educator and helping to ensure meaningful self-directed learning;
(2) provide opportunities for continuous learning inside and outside of classrooms and promoting experiential, immersive and peer-to-peer learning across temporal and spatial boundaries;
(3) support play, active knowledge making and learner engagement, which may increase learner motivation, reduce stress, and make teaching-learning processes more fun;
(4) enable recursive feedback and differentiated learning, which may help bridge learning gaps and promote equality in and through education; and
(5) utilize a wealth of data that can be mined to improve pedagogical innovation, learning, and assessment.

VII: Need for Guidelines

We, the participants,

1. *Identify* the lack of (a) adequate governance systems to keep in check the quality and content of digital learning solutions and delivery systems; (b) any standard accredited system for certifying digital learning solutions and delivery systems; and (c) standards for the collection and use of data acquired through digital learning solutions and delivery systems;
2. *Emphasize* the need to ensure
   (1) Appropriateness of digital content developed and used for learning purposes, including its (i) aesthetics, (ii) safety associated with learner health and well-being, (iii) alignment with learning outcomes as specified in officially mandated curricula, (iv) consistency with the concept of whole brain development, and (v) compatibility with shared values of humanity (as underlined in SDG 4);
   (2) Credibility and efficacy of digital learning systems in contributing to achieving desired learning outcomes as well as societal goals as encapsulated in the SDGs;
   (3) Robust, scientifically rigorous processes for measuring the extent to which desired learning outcomes are met; and
   (4) Enhanced opportunities for developing new technologies, environments, and pedagogies that can expand connected learning across the various contexts of life, including school, home, and community, and across the lifespan;
3. *Underline* the need to ensure a globally consistent and locally applicable system of guidelines and framework for certifying digital learning solutions and delivery systems that would support and assist a wide range of stakeholders—including developers, designers, students, teachers, parents and administrators—in their efforts to develop or select high-quality, credible, and appropriate gaming and digital learning tools; and
4. *Advocate* for a covenant that protects against the abuse and misuse of the education-related data of learners and teachers, both passive and interactive.

VIII: A Call for Action

Participants of TECH 2018 call for an urgent and effective global action to develop a set of guidelines to ensure the quality of digital content, its instructional design and the platforms on which the content is provided to all learners, as well as the ongoing assessment to identify challenges and opportunities.

The Conference participants congratulate UNESCO MGIEP for its timely initiative and urge UNESCO MGIEP to:

1. *Establish* an international expert group to develop draft guidelines, taking into consideration regional and gender representation and the need for such guidelines to be flexible and adapted to diverse local contexts and learner needs;
2. *Ensure* full representation by all relevant stakeholders in the deliberation and finalization of the guidelines through a crowd on the cloud sourcing process to minimize costs and environmental impacts associated with traditional face-to-face meetings; and
3. *Present* the MGIEP Governing Board approved guidelines for endorsement and approval of the Member States at the 206th session of the UNESCO Executive Board and the 40th session of the UNESCO General Conference in 2019.