

Committee: Human Rights Council

Issue: The use of digital technologies for the promotion of inclusive practices in education

Student Officer: Niki Paraskevopoulou

Position: President

INTRODUCTION

The rapid evolution of digital technologies is a phenomenon that is seemingly accompanied by both advantages and disadvantages, consequently, sparking both anxiety and excitement to individuals. On one hand, it has led many to raise concerns regarding the future of our society, while on the other hand, digital technologies seem to be bringing about numerous opportunities for both individuals and the society as a whole. In any case, it is evident that such technologies are implemented in almost every aspect of our lives in order to facilitate processes that may greatly vary.

One of the most important domains in which technology is gradually being implemented is education. The process of its implementation, however, is not simple since every country has different capacities based on its resources, people, and expertise. In essence, educational systems around the world are developing in different paces, creating a debate concerning the equal opportunities educational systems should offer to all people on a global scale. In a shortest scale as well, even within the same country, the use of digital technologies in education differs from institution to institution, with the most notable differences occurring between not only the public and the private sector but also the urban and the rural areas.

This issue of social inequalities, created by the integration of technology in education, is most likely to be combatted through the spread of technology itself. However, this will only be plausible if the international community manages to use digital technologies in education globally in the appropriate manner so as to create inclusive educational systems. In the contemporary era that we live in, sustainability is, or at least should be, one of the main priorities of our society. The United Nations Organization has set 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in its 2030 Agenda, which, among others, advocate for quality education, reduced inequalities, and sustainable cities and communities, to name a few concepts related to inclusive educational systems.

Therefore, as the Human Rights Council, our aim and priority is to protect the fundamental human rights of all, while preventing any kind of violation of them. Of course, education is included, specifically in the Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and Quality Education is the 4th SDG. Since the society is composed by individuals, whose skills and morals are shaped through their education, it is foreseeable that creating a more inclusive society, requires a more inclusive educational system. Hence, it is high time that the international community collaborated in order to find the appropriate measures to promote and achieve the implementation of inclusive practices in education, taking advantage of all the modern opportunities that digital technologies have to offer.



Figure 1 Children come together irrespective of differences such race, gender, disabilities etc.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Digital Technology

Digital technology is a base two process. Digitized information is recorded in binary code of combinations of the digits 0 and 1, also called bits, which represent words and images. Digital technology enables immense amounts of information to be compressed on small storage devices that can be easily preserved and transported, also quickening data transmission speeds. All in all, as digital technologies rapidly evolve, they are being implemented more and more in many different domains, transforming how people communicate, learn, and work.¹

¹"Digital Technology." Dictionary of American History. *Encyclopedia.com*. 17 May 2019. <<https://www.encyclopedia.com>>.

Education

Education is the process by which people acquire knowledge, skills, habits, values, or attitudes. Ideally, education should help people develop an appreciation of their cultural heritage and live more satisfying lives. It should also enable people to become productive members of society, both as citizens sharing in democratic processes and as workers in the economy.²

Inclusive Educational Systems

Inclusive education is about ensuring access to quality education for all students by effectively meeting their diverse needs in a way that is responsive, accepting, respectful and supportive. It is directly linked to the development and designing of schools, classrooms, programs and activities which aim to encourage all students learn and participate together.³

Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism is a political or social philosophy that promotes *cultural diversity* — that is, the existence of a variety of cultures in a particular group. It is based on the idea of mutual respect for differences rather than a striving for sameness. Multiculturalism also encourages consideration of the contributions that immigrants from various ethnic groups have made to their adopted country.⁴

Disability

Disability is a condition that affects a person's ability to perform the activities of everyday life. Disability was once considered a biological impairment with a specific medical cause. Today, the term is more broadly defined as any physical or mental condition that substantially limits one or more major life activities.⁵

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Youth with disabilities

Although disabilities used to be considered evil and abnormal in the past, the reality is that people with disabilities have equal rights with the rest of the population and it is

²Evans, Andrea E. "Education." *World Book Advanced*, World Book, 2019, www.worldbookonline.com/advanced/article?id=ar174220&sc=-1. Accessed 31 May 2019.

³"What Is Inclusive Education?" *Inclusive Education Canada*, Inclusive Education Canada, 2017, inclusiveeducation.ca/about/what-is-ie/.

⁴Zanca, Russell. "Multiculturalism." *World Book Advanced*, World Book, 2019, www.worldbookonline.com/advanced/article?id=ar377340. Accessed 31 May 2019.

⁵Marfisi, Carol A., and Diane Nelson Bryen. "Disability." *World Book Advanced*, World Book, 2019, www.worldbookonline.com/advanced/article?id=ar160320. Accessed 9 Sept. 2019.

considered unacceptable to exile and segregate them supposedly to help them, when there are ways and means to include them in the society nowadays. When it comes to children, education is one of their most fundamental rights and free, quality education should be easily accessible to all. However, children with disabilities are less likely to go to school and later in life are more likely to experience poverty. The world is estimated to count 94 million children with disabilities, many of whom, unfortunately, are constantly marginalized and are often not given the chance to be contributing members of the society. According to the “State of the World's Children 2013”, published by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), only 51 percent of boys and 42 percent of girls with disabilities complete primary school as compared to 61 percent and 51 percent for boys and girls without disabilities. Even though the percentages are shockingly low for all children without disabilities as well, it is evident that disabilities serve as great obstacles for children to complete even primary education, since the infrastructure as well as the teaching methods are often not inclusive.

Movement for Change

During the late 20th century, when different states around the world had sufficient information to create special educational curricula as well as form specialized educational programs for children who had special needs, due to either their mental or physical health problems, the rising trend was to establish separate institutions for those children. At the time, the governments’ intentions were not to discriminate but to facilitate the learning process for all students by both offering unique programs to children who might need them and ensuring that procedures in regular schools will not have to follow slower paces. However, time and research showed that these practices were wrong and ineffective.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, many have been advocating for inclusive educational institutions rather than separate special ones. The main and most crucial argument which supports the claim for this change is the importance of the social aspect of learning. It is foreseeable that an inclusive learning environment boosts the social skills of all children as it teaches the values of togetherness and acceptance. Special education placement may help children with disabilities in certain ways as the courses are almost tailor made; however, these special institutions do not sufficiently prepare their students to become members of the society. Simultaneously, inclusive educational facilities accompany benefits for the students that do not face academic challenges as well, as they not only teach but also practice the values of acceptance, collaboration and inclusion which leads to the elimination of discrimination.

Special vs Inclusive Education

Regardless of the centuries, the opinions were never completely aligned. The controversy regarding the benefits and drawbacks of special and inclusive education still remains. There are supporters for each type of educational system all around the world. However, most of the times, people do not have trouble recognizing that both of them indeed have benefits as well as disadvantages. The conflict arises from the difficulty of people to draw the line and decide which of the two outweighs the other, concerning both systems. Under no circumstances is this difficulty irrational, as the needs for people with disabilities are not the same depending on not only the type of disability but also the level that it affects their ability to perform the activities of everyday life, based on the definition of disability. Therefore, in order for such a complicated matter to be resolved, finding common ground is not enough. Many different parameters should be placed in order to ensure that recommended solutions will both be viable for every different known case and offer equal chances for free, but quality education, to all.

Technology in education

Moving on to the other significant aspect of the issue at hand, it is worth mentioning that technology is evolving so rapidly that it has impacted almost every aspect of our lives. Although many have often characterized this technological intervention as ineffective or even detrimental for a variety of reasons, the application of technology in education may be vastly beneficial. The implementation of technology in specific ways that would follow series of research, could truly facilitate the creation of an inclusive educational environment, which at the same time will bring about exciting resources for both the students and the educators.

For instance, through digital technologies, educators have the chance to develop the outdated traditional standardized testing frameworks as well as track student performance and measure learning progress over time. Academic institutions of any level now have the opportunity to take advantage of Artificial Intelligence in order to develop student learning solutions based on test results. Moreover, innovative technologies have the potential to help educators improve the results for scholars with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). The aforementioned can serve as examples of how digital technologies and AI can help educators offer personalised treatment to their students while working in an all-inclusive environment.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

Canada

The population of Canada seems to be alarmed by the issue at hand as there have been efforts to spread the importance of inclusive education across the country. There are national non-governmental organizations such as the IEC which stands for Inclusive Education Canada. IEC is dedicated to ensuring that Canadian schools offer quality education for all students in inclusive schools and classrooms. IEC is aiming to achieve this goal by advocating for effective policy provision from the government as well as investment in education so that both students and teachers are supported, and the appropriate infrastructure and capacity is built for inclusion to be effective and practical in reality. The resources of Inclusive Education Canada include articles, presentations, reports, briefs, guides, books and brochures which are all used to inform parents, educators, policy makers, academics and researchers.

United States of America (USA)

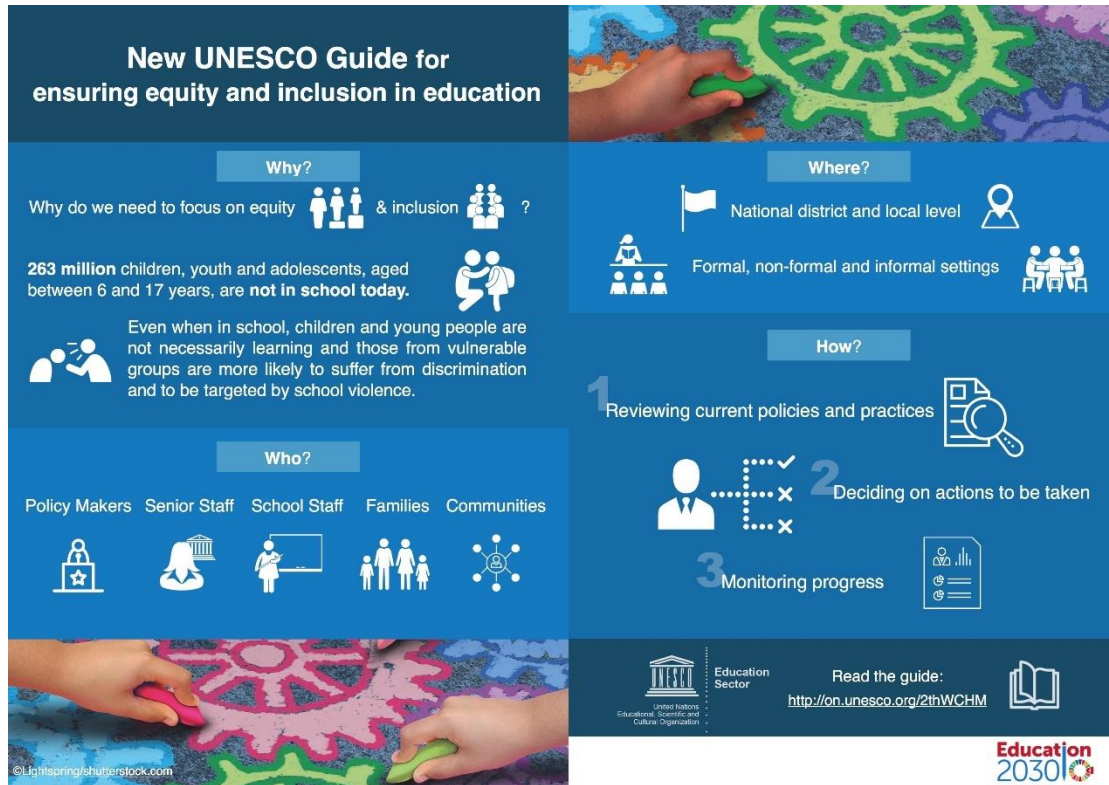
Numerous initiatives have started in the United States of America in order to raise awareness about the severity of the problem. For instance, in 1997, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Disability Policy Paper was published, establishing a policy “to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities both within USAID programs and in host countries where USAID has programs”. The two main goals of the US Government are to improve learning outcomes and expand access to quality basic education for all, especially marginalized and vulnerable populations. These two principles are essentially the principles of inclusive education. These goals were set after USAID published the first U.S. Government Strategy on International Basic Education which aims to “achieve a world where education systems in partner countries enable all individuals to acquire the education and skills needed to be productive members of society”.⁶ USA is also a country that strives to incorporate technology in all domains, hence, the use of digital technologies to achieve inclusive education is surely a plan the country would agree to.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

UNESCO is one of the most important bodies of the UN with expertise in education. The organization strives towards inclusive education, as it is clearly mentioned in the Education 2030 Incheon Declaration, and as it aims to achieve the 4th Sustainable

⁶ https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1865/USG-Education-Strategy_FY2019-2023_Final_Web.pdf

Development Goal. UNESCO does not view digital and emerging technologies as a threat to their purpose; on the contrary, the organization advocates for the use of these new technological tools in order to accomplish their goals in a more innovative and effective way. According to the UNESCO Director-General, Audrey Azoulay, “Artificial intelligence can be a great opportunity to accelerate the achievement of sustainable development goals, but any



technological revolution leads to new imbalances that we must anticipate.”⁷

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of Event
1925	The International Bureau of Education (IBE) was founded in Geneva.
December 10, 1948	The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the 183 rd session of the UN General Assembly.
1969	The IBE was fully integrated into UNESCO.
1997	The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Disability Policy Paper was published.

⁷“Artificial Intelligence with Human Values for Sustainable Development.” UNESCO, UNESCO, 2019, en.unesco.org/artificial-intelligence.

January 2016	The IBE, under the auspices of UNESCO, published a resource pack for supporting inclusive education.
September 14, 2017	The USAID released the first-ever U.S. Government Strategy on International Basic Education.

UN INVOLVEMENT: RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

- United Nations General Assembly, 1948, Universal Declaration of Human Rights⁸
- International Bureau of Education & UNESCO, January 2016, Training Tools for Curriculum Development – Reaching Out to All Learners: A Resource Pack for Supporting Inclusive Education⁹
- UNESCO, 2016, Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all¹⁰
- UNESCO, 2017, A Guide for ensuring inclusion and equity in education¹¹

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

Sustainable Development Goals

One of the main priorities of the United Nations rightnow is the accomplishment of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The topic at hand is directly linked to more than one of these Global Goals. Firstly, SDG 4 refers to Quality Education which is the foundation to creating sustainable development. According to the United Nations, “in addition to improving quality of life, access to inclusive education can help equip locals with the tools required to develop innovative solutions to the world’s greatest problems.”¹² Moreover, by properly incorporating digital technologies in institutions around the world, a huge step forward will be made towards improving the infrastructure of educational facilities, while encouraging innovation. Thus, SDG 9 is also related to our issue. Lastly, the whole purpose of inclusive education identifies with purpose of SDG 10 which refers to reduced inequalities.

⁸<https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

⁹http://www.ibe.unesco.org/sites/default/files/resources/ibe-crp-inclusiveeducation-2016_eng.pdf

¹⁰<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000245656>

¹¹<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000248254>

¹²“Quality Education.” *Sustainable Development Goals*, United Nations, www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/education/.



Figure 3 The 17 Sustainable Development Goals

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

The Role of Educators

Regardless of the frameworks and policies of each country, the educators are the ones who are in direct contact with all students, thus, their role is vital for a successful inclusive educational system. First and foremost, teachers should not only support but also promote the elimination of discrimination against students with disabilities, migratory populations of different racial or ethnic background as well as indigenous peoples. In order to achieve this, while ensuring that learners take full advantage of the opportunities technologies offer, educators ought to serve as intermediaries between their students and the new digital technologies.

The Role of the Government

The government is responsible for granting equal access to free and quality education irrespective of gender, race, disabilities etc. It also needs to ensure that the appropriate infrastructure for digital technologies to be used are provided to all academic institutions across their nations. Apart from the infrastructure, it is highly important to keep the educators updated, hence, the state should host special trainings of educators regularly so that they are always informed regarding the developments of digital technologies.

In order to create an effective inclusive educational environment which would seem a practical reality to all, some special care services might be required for children with disabilities. For instance, in case of physical challenges, the states should always ensure that the institutions have the necessary equipment and infrastructure to facilitate their access.

Moreover, appropriate measures need to be taken in order to support children facing mental challenges as well. Depending on the country's stand on the matter, this can be done by either building appropriate public special institutions in which digital technologies should be integrated as well so as to facilitate teaching or providing schools with personnel like psychologists specially trained to aid children who need it on an individual level and support them throughout their learning process.

The Role of the international community

The role of the international community is also vital since it has to ensure equity globally by offering resources to the countries that do not have enough available to integrate technology in their educational systems. Since it is evident that not all countries experience the benefits of the latest technological advancements simultaneously, NGOs like the UN should serve as intermediaries between More and Less Economically Developed Countries so that the former may share to the latter expertise regarding digital technologies developments relating to the more efficient use of them in education. Lastly, international organizations or research centers with the appropriate resources and expertise should publish reports and guidelines for all countries to improve their educational systems, identifying what each lacks to achieve inclusive education as well as offering personalized solutions to improve the situation by properly applying digital technologies.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

"Artificial Intelligence with Human Values for Sustainable Development." *UNESCO*, UNESCO, 2019, en.unesco.org/artificial-intelligence.

B, Kali. "The Future Of Education And Technology." *ELearning Industry*, 14 Jan. 2019, elearningindustry.com/future-of-education-and-technology.

"Digital Technology." Dictionary of American History. *Encyclopedia.com*. 17 May 2019. <<https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/dictionaries-thesauruses-pictures-and-press-releases/digital-technology>>. Accessed 29 May 2019.

"Education." *U.S. Agency for International Development*, 22 Aug. 2019, www.usaid.gov/education.

Evans, Andrea E. "Education." World Book Advanced, World Book, 2019, www.worldbookonline.com/advanced/article?id=ar174220&sc=-1. Accessed 31 May 2019.

"Inclusive Education." *Global Campaign For Education United States Chapter*, campaignforeducationusa.org/topic/detail/inclusive-education.

“Industries, Innovation and Infrastructure”. *Sustainable Development Goals*, United Nations, <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/infrastructure-industrialization/>.

Marfisi, Carol A., and Diane Nelson Bryen. "Disability." *World Book Advanced*, World Book, 2019, www.worldbookonline.com/advanced/article?id=ar160320. Accessed 9 Sept. 2019.

“Quality Education”. *Sustainable Development Goals*, United Nations, www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/education/.

“Reduced Inequalities”. *Sustainable Development Goals*, United Nations, <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/inequality/>.

“What Is Inclusive Education?” *Inclusive Education Canada*, Inclusive Education Canada, 2017, inclusiveeducation.ca/about/what-is-ie/.

Zanca, Russell. "Multiculturalism." *World Book Advanced*, World Book, 2019. www.worldbookonline.com/advanced/article?id=ar377340. Accessed 31 May 2019.

Figures

Figure1	https://twominuteparenting.com/can-inclusion-really-work-for-children-with-special-needs/	2
Figure 2	https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000248254	7
Figure3	https://blogs.sas.com/content/sascp/2018/09/25/embracing-sustainable-development-goals-with-free-resources/	9