United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

Novice Committee

Chair: Nicole Li

Co-Chair: Junjie (Lily) Liang

Introduction

Established in 1946, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is a specialized agency with the mission of promoting international peace and security through education, arts, sciences, culture, communication, and information. The organization currently has 194 member states, with founding members being the United States, China, France, India, Mexico, Brazil, Canada, Greece, the United Kingdom, and more.

Topic 1: Education in Developing Areas and Warzones

Introduction

Education is a human right for everyone throughout life and that access must be matched by quality (UNESCO, 2022). However, many barriers exist in the face of one's access to high-quality education, especially poverty and conflict. [JL1] In September 2023, UNESCO announced that the total number of out-of-school children had increased to 250 million (UNESCO, 2023), proving the growing significance of this issue in the current society. Underdeveloped and developing nations have the highest number of children not enrolled in school mainly due to

their vulnerability to conflict, a lack of school infrastructure, inadequate supply of teachers, and more. Statistics show that Somalia from East Africa has nearly 85 percent of out-of-school children, making it the country with the highest number of children out of school worldwide (International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa, 2024). The primary cause of this issue is the ongoing Somali crisis, which began with the Somali civil war in the 1980s and evolved into a globalized ideological conflict through state collapse, clan factionalism, and warlordism (Conciliation Resources, 2010). UNESCO, whose mission includes contributing to the eradication of poverty and intercultural dialogue through education, has been a major force for change in the world.[NL2]

Past UN Actions

In April 2000, participants from 164 countries gathered in Dakar, Senegal, and adopted the Dakar Framework for Action, Education for All at the World Education Forum. They agreed to achieve the six wide-ranging education goals by 2015 (EFA, 2020). The six goals of Dakar include Early childhood care and education (ECCE), free and compulsory basic education (UPE), learning opportunities for young & adults, 50% literacy rate improvement, gender equality, and quality of education (World Education Forum, 2000).[LL3]

In 2002, UNESCO established the Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report to update the annual progress and the implementation of national and international strategies to help hold all relevant partners accountable for their commitments (Global Education Monitoring Report, 2023).

In September 2015, The United Nations established 17 Sustainable Development Goals, of which Sustainable Development Goal 4 is quality education. The United Nations established 10 targets to achieve by the end of 2023 (United Nations, n.d.).

Examples of Targets:

Target 4.3: ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational, and tertiary education, including university.

Target 4.5: eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and children in vulnerable situations.

4. a: Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability, and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive, and effective learning environments for all.

4. c: substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States.

In March 2020, UNESCO formed the Global Education Coalition to address school closures around the world and education inequalities during the pandemic. The coalition brings

together partners from different sectors to coordinate global responses for the continuity of learning (UNESCO, 2024).

The following September, the International Finance Facility for Education (IFFEd) was launched at the Transforming Education Summit. IFFEd is an impactful program that supports new financing for education worldwide, multiplying donor dollars by seven times. IFFEd provided $2 billion in additional affordable funding for education programs and could contribute an extra $10 billion for education and skills by 2030 (United Nations, n.d.).

In 2023, UNESCO has maintained the momentum for global educational change by working with all stakeholders to transform their commitments into practical action and ensure that education remains the top priority of the political agenda. From the adoption of a new Recommendation to promote peace, to the entry into force of the Global Convention on Higher Education, and to galvanizing the global movement toward greening education, UNESCO has continued to make significant progress (UNESCO, 2024).

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Topic 2: Ethics within Rapidly Developing Artificial Intelligence

Introduction

Today, the effects of artificial intelligence (AI) have trickled its way to every corner of

the world. From the emergence of self-checkout machines to the recent release of ChatGPT 4,

artificial intelligence will only continue to develop and expand in the future (Marr, 2023). AI's rapid development is transforming how humans work, interact, and live. However, challenges such as cyber security, algorithm biases, and misusage of AI have risen in public discourse, and they are issues that need to be addressed urgently (Watters, 2023). Therefore, it is important to consider and define an ethical practice of AI in fields such as genetic engineering, education, and technology.

Past Actions

In 2019, UNESCO and the Government of the People's Republic of China co-organized the International Conference on Artificial Intelligence and Education (UNESCO, 2019). The outcome document of the conferences was the "Beijing Consensus on Artificial Intelligence and Education," which contained 44 preambles that tackled the usage of AI in education. Under the framework of the Beijing Consensus, UNESCO published the "Artificial Intelligence and Education: Guidance for Policymakers," which aims to a shared understanding of the challenges and advantages of AI usage in all levels of education, in 2023 (UNESCO, 2023a).

Wishing to address the drawbacks of AI, UNESCO published the first global standard on AI ethics known as the "Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence" in November of 2021. The framework includes four core values, ten core principles, and eleven areas for policy actions adopted by all 193 member states in the United Nations (UNESCO, 2024).

Four Core Values

1) Human rights and human dignity

2) Living in peace

3) Ensuring diversity and inclusiveness

4) Environment and ecosystem flourishing

Ten Core Principles

1) Proportionality and Do No Harm – "The use of AI systems must not go beyond what is necessary to achieve a legitimate aim. Risk assessment should be used to prevent harms resulting from such uses."

2) Safety and Security – "unwanted harms (safety risks) …[and] vulnerabilities to attack (security risks) should be avoided and addressed by AI actors."

3) Right to Privacy and Data Protection – "Privacy must be protected and promoted throughout the AI lifecycle. Adequate data protection frameworks should also be established."

4) Multi-stakeholder and Adaptive Governance & Collaboration – "International law & national sovereignty must be respected in the use of data. Additionally, participation of diverse stakeholders is necessary for inclusive approaches to AI governance."

5) Responsibility and Accountability – "AI systems should be auditable and traceable. There should be oversight, impact assessment, audit, and due diligence mechanisms in place to avoid conflicts with human rights norms and threats to environmental wellbeing."

6) Transparency and Explainability – "The ethical deployment of AI systems depends on their transparency & explainability (T&E). The level of T&E should be appropriate to the context, as there may be tension between T&E and other principles such as privacy, safety, and security."

7) Human Oversight and Determination – "Member states should ensure that AI systems do not displace ultimate human responsibility and accountability."

8) Sustainability – "AI technologies should be assessed against their impacts on 'sustainability,' understood as a set of constantly evolving goals including those set out in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)."

9) Awareness & Literacy – "Public understanding of AI and data should be promoted through open & accessible education, civic engagement, digital skills & AI ethics training, media & information literacy."

10) Fairness and Non-Discrimination – "AI actors should promote social justice, fairness, and non-discrimination while taking an inclusive approach to ensure AI's benefits are accessible to all."

Figure 1. Image displaying the 11 core areas for policy action in the publication of "Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence" (UNESCO, 2024).

In 2023, the United Nations (UN) created an advisory council containing 39 members to address international governance issues of artificial intelligence (Li, 2023). Members will include government officials from countries – such as Spain and Saudi Arabia – executives from

technology companies – such as Sony, OpenAI, and Microsoft – and academics worldwide from countries such as Japan, the United States, and Russia (Mukherjee, 2023).

When talking about the spread of information in the online media, UNESCO wishes to equip those working in education with the necessary skills to support students in the digital climate through its Media and Information Literacy (MIL) program. During the Global MIL Week in 2023, the Antenna in Sarajevo of the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture organizes activities related to the topic of AI in classrooms for teachers in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Later, a workshop focusing on a "human-centered approach in using AI in Education" was co-organized with the Faculty of Political Science Department at the University of Banja Luka. More than 30 participants had the opportunity to explore methods for prioritizing a human-centered approach to AI in education, and the ethics of AI in a classroom environment (UNESCO, 2023b).

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4) **Multi-stakeholder and Adaptive Governance & Collaboration** – "International law & national sovereignty must be respected in the use of data. Additionally, participation of diverse stakeholders is necessary for inclusive approaches to AI governance."

5) **Responsibility and Accountability** – "AI systems should be auditable and traceable. There should be oversight, impact assessment, audit, and due diligence mechanisms in place to avoid conflicts with human rights norms and threats to environmental wellbeing."

6) **Transparency and Explainability** – "The ethical deployment of AI systems depends on their transparency & explainability (T&E). The level of T&E should be appropriate to the context, as there may be tension between T&E and other principles such as privacy, safety, and security."

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