**Topic B: Bridging the Global Digital Divide in Education through AI and Technology**

UNESCO



## **Introduction**

We are pleased to welcome you to this edition of the Model of United Nations of Universidad Anáhuac Querétaro (UAQMUN 2026). The School of International Relations and the organizing team sincerely thank you for your participation, and we also wish you a formative, challenging, and enriching experience within this model.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) serves as the preeminent international body dedicated to promoting cultural and scientific exchange. Its mandate naturally positions it as the principal venue for discussing the multifaceted issues of education, which are often inextricably linked to technology, social development, and human rights.

On this occasion, the committee will focus on the debate surrounding the topic:

***“Bridging the Global Digital Divide in Education through AI and Technology”***

As artificial intelligence and educational technology continue to expand, the gap between countries with access to these tools and those without is widening, sparking a complex debate about equity, inclusion, and a new era of learning. This issue raises questions about the unequal distribution of resources, the role of governments and international organizations in ensuring access, and the ethical responsibilities tied to innovation.

Therefore, this committee invites delegates to rigorously examine the historical context, legal frameworks, and ethical arguments surrounding this debate. This document provides a general overview that facilitates a foundational understanding of the antecedents, dynamics, and consequences of this episode.

However, it is expected that each representative contributes with a deep research work that allows for a consistent reflection of the position of each State, so that, at the same time, a space for reflection on the challenges of ensuring equitable and inclusive education in a digital age is opened.

Finally, we reiterate our recognition to each of the delegates for accepting the challenge of undertaking this exercise of dialogue and cooperation. We hope that this United Nations Model is not only an academic space, but an opportunity to understand the significance of using negotiation to make this world a better place.

**Topic “B”: Bridging the Global Digital Divide in Education through AI and Technology**

The global digital divide describes global disparities, primarily between developed and developing nations, regarding access to computing and information resources such as the internet, and the opportunities derived from such access. This phenomenon extends beyond more connectivity, encompassing a number of complex dimensions that collectively impede full participation in a digital society. Over the last few decades, the understanding of the digital divide has evolved from a question of physical access to one of usage and outcomes, often referred to as a “second-level divide” (Hartnett, 2019).

The physical access gap refers to the unequal distribution of hardware (such as laptops and tablets), software, and high-quality broadband. A clear example of this disparity is seen in the lack of fixed-broadband subscriptions in low-income countries, which have only 1 per 100 people, compared to 39 per 100 in high-income countries. This divide is particularly pronounced between urban and rural areas (OECD, n.d.).

Furthermore, the sociodemographic gap shows how existing inequalities in society are mirrored and amplified by access. Factors such as income, education level, geographic location, race, ethnicity, and gender play a significant role in determining access and usage (Kloza, 2023). Marginalized communities, including minorities and rural populations, are disproportionately affected by this divide.

***Importance***

The ramifications of these multifaceted divides are most acute in the educational sector. The lack of technology access and digital skills creates significant barriers to learning, causing students from disadvantaged backgrounds to fall behind academically and face lower graduation rates. These challenges are especially evident in the context of distance learning of curricula that require access to online resources. The inability to complete homework or participate fully in virtual classrooms contributes directly to poor academic performance, which perpetuates inequality (Kloza, 2023).

This cycle of disadvantage is compounded by the global economy’s growing dependence on digital skills. As a result, individuals who lack technology access and digital literacy are at a significant disadvantage in a labor market that increasingly demands AI literacy, data science, and critical thinking. Therefore, the digital divide in education is not simply a technology problem; it is a fundamental economic and social equity problem (Education Connection, n.d.).

The failure to seize digital opportunities not only magnifies existing societal inequalities but also reinforces them, creating a downward spiral of deprivation. Limited access to education translates into lower employability and reduced income, which in turn limits a household’s ability to invest in technology, perpetuating a circle of poverty and digital inequality that is detrimental to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (Mpedi & Marwala, 2025).

***Antecedents***

The concept of the “digital divide” was popularized in the 1990s in the United States, initially referring to inequalities in access to computers and, later, the internet. Early policy focus was overwhelmingly on closing this first-level divide through hardware distribution and infrastructure rollout.

1. The One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) Project: A Cautionary Tale

A notable example of this approach was the E-Rate program, designed to make telecommunications access more affordable for schools and libraries. Globally, one of the most emblematic initiatives of this era was the “One Laptop per Child” project. This project, founded by Nicholas Negroponte and backed by the UN Development Programme and corporations like Google and Intel, aimed to provide millions of low-cost laptops to children in developing nations. The laptop’s price, which remained above the $100 target, made them prohibitively expensive for low-income populations, and a lack of technical support led to a high rate of non-functioning devices (O’Sullivan, 2021).

1. The COVID-19 Pandemic as a Catalyst

The pre-existing global digital divide was sharply illuminated and accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. As schools and universities worldwide shifted to distance learning, the pre-existing inequalities in connectivity and device availability became drastically more acute. In developing nations and low-income communities around the world, students were left without internet access, which prevented them from accessing educational resources and participating in virtual classrooms (Education Connection, n.d.). In many cases, the students were forced to resort to makeshift and often insufficient solutions, such as using their smartphones for homework or using public Wi-Fi hotspots at libraries (Kloza, 2023).

The pandemic led governments and school districts worldwide to rush to invest in educational technology, distributing devices and funding emergency connectivity to keep learning going. While these temporary efforts helped mitigate the short-term crisis, they also introduced an emerging challenge: the transition from reactive, crisis-driven funding models to long-term, sustainable policies (edWeb, 2025).

1. The Promise of AI and Technology in Education

Educational technology (EdTech) is the combined use of hardware, software, educational theory, and practice to facilitate learning and teaching. Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education is a subset of this, applying AI algorithms and tools within classrooms to enhance teaching and learning experiences.

One of the most significant promises of AI is the ability for personalized learning and curriculum adaptation. AI systems can analyze large amounts of student data to pinpoint knowledge gaps, detect struggling students, and provide tailored support. For example, AI tutors can adapt the content and pace of lessons to a particular student's needs, allowing learners to progress at their own pace. This capability is particularly valuable for developing nations, where a shortage of trained teachers may mean students do not get the individualized attention and support they require (Top Hat, n.d.). Despite its potential, the implementation of AI and educational technology in developing countries faces complex and multifaceted hurdles. These challenges, which go beyond simple physical access, are fundamental to crafting policies that are both practical and equitable.

**Guiding questions**

1. How can government and international organizations shift policy focus from merely providing physical access to creating the digital skills and pedagogical frameworks required for meaningful engagement with technology?
2. In a world with significant financial and infrastructural limitations, what is the optimal balance between investing in high-tech AI solutions and low-tech, scalable solutions that address foundational literacy and connectivity gaps?
3. What specific regulatory frameworks and international agreements are needed to ensure that AI in education is developed and deployed equitably, addressing issues of algorithmic bias, data privacy, and lack of transparency?
4. How can the United Nations and its member states incentivize the ethical development of AI for education, encouraging corporations to prioritize social good and equity over profit and data collection?
5. How can nations leverage the power of global collaborative learning platforms and open-source educational resources to democratize knowledge and create a more interconnected global education system?
6. How can the international community ensure that AI and EdTech solutions are culturally and linguistically relevant for a diverse range of learners, rather than being “parachuted in” with a one-size-fits-all approach?
7. Beyond top-down distribution models, what role can public-private partnerships play in creating community-based, self-sustaining ecosystems for digital inclusion that address local needs and foster long-term digital literacy?
8. How can educational systems be reformed to better train and empower teachers to effectively integrate AI and EdTech into the classroom, ensuring they remain central to the learning process and are not simply replaced by technology?
9. Given the temporary, crisis-driven funding models of recent years, what innovative financial strategies and public policies can ensure the long-term sustainability of digital education initiatives, including device maintenance and infrastructure upgrades?
10. How do we ensure that the digital education revolution does not leave behind the most marginalized populations, including those in rural areas, indigenous communities, and people with disabilities, who have been historically excluded from technological progress?

**Member States**

1. Nigeria
2. Benin
3. Egypt
4. Namibia
5. Greece
6. Cambodia
7. Zambia
8. China
9. Mexico
10. Peru
11. Ukraine
12. India
13. Pakistan
14. Iraq
15. United Kingdom
16. United States
17. Canada
18. Sweden
19. Austria
20. Japan
21. Belgium
22. Switzerland
23. Spain
24. Germany
25. Netherlands
26. France
27. Brazil
28. Argentina
29. Italy
30. South Korea

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