UNESCO Chair Report

Supporting Technological Innovation to Improve Access to Educational Opportunities for All.

Chair: Aleksei Kloos
Deputy Chair: Ojiro Yahagi

Personal Statements

Chair – ALEKSEI KLOOS

Dear Delegates,

Thank you for joining MUNISS' 17th session! It is my absolute pleasure to be your chair at UNESCO this year. Allow me to introduce myself very briefly.

My name is Aleksei, and I'm currently 15, turning 16 in late April, just after MUNISS. I am the Vice President of the Model United Nations club of my school, the Franconian International School, and I have been to 5 conferences in total: two of which were in Germany, two internally hosted, and one abroad, but this is my first time chairing, so this is also a new experience for me.

Funnily enough, last year, for MUNISS' 16th session, I was a delegate myself in the very committee I'm very grateful to chair: UNESCO, so I've truly come full circle this year. Last time I was here, I saw amazing, fruitful, and engaging debates, and I would love nothing more than to continue that again this year.

UNESCO is a fantastic committee for intermediate delegates, and together with my Deputy Chair, Ojiro Yahagi, we will ensure that this is a welcoming place for constructive discussions about topics that are still relevant today whilst balancing having fun and being productive. I am very much looking forward to seeing you all in April and for the debates that will ensue. Until then, best of luck with your position papers, and hope that this guide will be of use to you all.

Deputy Chair – OJIRO YAHAGI

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 17th session of MUNISS! I will be chairing you for this conference as deputy chair and looking forward to seeing you all then. Let me introduce myself briefly before you get into the debate topics.

My name is Ojiro. I'm 16 years old and I have been to 2 conferences, one being the last MUNISS hosted last year and the other one was FAMUN recently hosted in the Netherlands. I've been part of both conferences as a delegate, just like you, and this is my first time chairing an official conference.

I am very much aware of how important chairs can be to have a flowing, meaningful debate between delegates so I will put my full effort into providing you with such an environment. The main chair, Aleksei Kloos, and I promise you to have both a constructive and enjoyable committee. I can't wait to see you all in April at ISS, but till then, get ready to have the most exciting debate you've ever experienced.

Introduction

Despite revolutionary advancements in technology, it is still important to note that there are still many challenges that bar many children from receiving education. There is also a particular focus on those below the poverty line or in middle-to-low-income countries, as they face a more often intense, persisting challenges in regards to access of education due to a variety of reasons.

Whils there can be many reasons as to why children struggle so particularly in certain regions of the world with access to education, there are a few which are more predominantly found than the rest. Such examples include a lack of funding, a lack of (qualified) teachers, facilities, resources, distance, and expenses, to name a few. These are all factors that cause problems for those wishing to access educational opportunities, yet their opposites are necessary for children to easily access an education with a supporting environment that will foster positive growth.

Many of these issues can be successfully controlled, combated, or mitigated entirely through many promising developments in technology as of late. For example, the issue of a lack of resources can be in part resolved through the supplying of electronic devices which have access to the internet, allowing for any student to access information within a click.

It is paramount to acknowledge and address the strengths of recent developments in technology and decide which methods are best to support future growth to ensure that everyone, regardless of their background, has access to education.

Glossary

1. **Disparity:** A difference in level or treatment.
2. **Discrimination:** Unjust or prejudicial treatment of a group of people.
3. **Educational Injustice:** A subset of the larger social justice aims to eradicate unequal distribution of resources, opportunities, and privileges ("Injustice in the Education").
4. **Inequality:** Difference in degree and circumstances.
5. **Infrastructure:** Basic facilities (organization, physical) required for operation.
6. **Segregation:** The action of setting a group of things or people apart.
7. **Systemic:** Embedded within a system.

Issue Explanation

Even throughout the history of education, there have been countless instances of disparities, injustices, and inequalities when it comes to accessing it. Most of this injustice can be traced back to the historical context of discrimination and segregation of race, where marginalized groups within a nation have encountered systemic barriers in attempts to access equal educational opportunities ("Injustice in the Education").

An example of this can be seen in South Africa, during the period of Apartheid (Ocampo). Overtly racist policies, such as The Bantu Education Act of 1952, promoted educational inequalities that would force black South Africans to remain trapped in the working class. Additionally, through the creation of separate Departments of Education, disproportionate funding led to a distinct lack in the amount and quality of many educational resources, even qualified teachers.

Despite attempts to address and withdraw these previous policies, there are still many occurrences where student populations are largely homogenous in terms of race; many white students go to private schools, whereas many coloured students remain in public schools.

Race is not the only factor, but also distance. In rural Zambia, in addition to many rural places around the world, there is a notable amount of problems regarding academic performance that arise from a range of factors (Chitondo). Such factors, primarily brought on by distance to major cities, can include a shortage of trained teachers, inadequate school infrastructure, and a lack of adequate teaching materials, as some examples. The long distance from school to home can cause fatigue in students, whilst also ‘killing’ their concentration, and through this mental and physical exhaustion, it compromises their performance. However, this long distance can also limit many potential students from going to school in the first place.

Societal factors that stem from cultures can also largely impact access to education. In countries where there is a prevalent gender bias that perpetuates negative stereotypes about both sexes mostly contributes to a lack of access to education for girls. As of September 2021, approximately 30% of girls in Afghanistan have never entered primary education, and around 80% of school-aged girls are out of school ("Let Girls and Women").

However, this is where technology comes into play, made especially evident by the COVID-19 pandemic ("How Has Technology"). It has undeniably made profound changes in the education system, especially in accessibility to information. Now, books, audio, images, and videos, are all available at one’s fingertips, completely changing the role of teachers in a classroom. It is now up to governments,

educational departments, and engineers how to maximize the opportunities presented by technologies to ensure effective and efficient education is accessible everywhere.

History of the Topic

The historical, systematic roots of educational inequality, especially the lack of access to education, stem primarily from a deeply entrenched system that was particularly prevalent in European or Western societies. Essentially, this system pushed the narrative that education should only be accessible to the privileged elites of society which excludes a significant portion of the population based on income, status, and merit alone. This exclusion was only exacerbated through gender discrimination, which yet again marginalised significant portions of the population (Bowen, et al.).

During the Renaissance, there was an exponential rise in educational institutions that were linked to religious establishments, which prompted many developments in various academic fields, making it generally more accessible to the public, but was still discriminatory towards women and those of a lower class. Much later, during the Industrial Revolution, came about a period of notable societal and economic changes. There was an increased demand for an educated population, thus the establishment of more schools in Europe. However, lower economic classes, especially those below the poverty line, and especially marginalized communities still suffered from restricted access.

The impact of colonialism, especially in the 20th century, played a pivotal role in shaping and reforming many educational institutions and departments. Many postcolonial efforts were made to address these pre-existing disparities, as well as recognise the substantial role that education has in fostering both social and economic development through the work of an educated populous. However, the undeniable legacy of colonialism has left deep marks within many countries, and as this legacy still lingers, it further perpetuates unequal or limited access to education in many regions, making it especially difficult to tackle or change the status quo, which leads us to our present-day situation, where there have been significant advancements in education, but there are still great, evident struggles.

Any Previous Attempts

Beginning in 1990, the Education for All Movement (EfA) sought to ensure universal access to education with high-quality standards, mostly promoted by UNESCO. This particular movement prompted multiple multinational conferences and initiatives that highlight the significance of education when considering global development plans. This particular movement was extremely influential and successful in that sense, yet much of this progress is limited by challenges such as funding, sociocultural barriers, and in some cases, political instability. Regardless, the EfA contributed to the spread of awareness and efforts made globally, which can be seen through an increase in enrollment rates, and generally a wider range of educational opportunities, cementing it as a critical step forward.

Established in 2000 by the UN, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were essentially eight international, all-encompassing development goals with a deadline of approximately 2015. Whilst not having explicitly defined goals on technology and education, many of the goals established aimed to improve access to education, such as Goal 2 (Universal primary education). The MDGs primarily helped to catalyse efforts through active action and resource availability, thus leading to the promotion of advancements in technological developments, as well as expanding educational opportunities.

The world-renowned Sustainable Development Goals that were published by the UN in 2015 were an international call to action by 2030 across various sectors, especially including education and technology. For example, initiatives to increase investment in technology and educational infrastructure, along with digital literacy programmes have been particularly successful, yet remain limited by challenges such as unequal distribution of resources, and funding, as well as systemic barriers.

The UNESCO Strategy on Technological Innovation in Education (2021-2025) essentially incorporates multinational cooperation of policymakers, educators, and the like to address the complex challenges of leveraging technological advancements whilst improving access to quality education, as well as inclusivity in those accessing the aforementioned education. Through the help of governments, NGOs, and others, resources were successfully utilised to implement these goals to improve digital literacy, and connectivity, as well as expanding technological access and educational opportunities (“UNESCO Strategy”).

Media Contribution

Digital media will be the key to making education accessible for all. A variety of media to convey information to students can innovate the way of education where traditional education was often limited to traditional media such as books and photos. Different media make classes more interactive and enhance teaching and learning (Mateer).

Media is said to make the bridge between teacher and student stronger (Mateer). Media can make students more engaged in learning and motivated (Mateer). Social media can be very valuable for many students and teachers as it can be used to communicate anywhere, at any time, making education more accessible for people (Abid, et al.). Social media can also be used for establishing social connections, which might lead to future job opportunities for students. In these ways, Media can bring the accessibility of education to another level while having the same or better quality of learning than the traditional way.

[9] Understanding the role of digital technologies in education: A review - ScienceDirect

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