Session Outcome Document

Connected and coherent: the Yin and Yang of digital education

ITU - UNICEF - UNESCO

8 July 2026, 14:00

https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2026/Agenda/Session/327

Key Issues Discussed

- Digital education advances through two complementary pillars – the "Yin" of school connectivity (Giga) and the "Yang" of coherent, interoperable digital education systems (Gateways to Public Digital Learning) – which must be pursued together, not sequentially.
- Country experience shows connectivity itself has evolved: from simply "getting a school online" to designing tailored, end-to-end solutions per school, including electricity, security, child online protection and sustainable financing.
- Connecting a school is only the starting point. Panellists cautioned against the instinct to follow connectivity with more hardware – tablets or standalone LMS platforms are costly, difficult to sustain, and require a level of teacher capacity that is often not yet in place.
- The technical foundations needed once a school is connected include curriculum-mapped content coded as infrastructure, interoperable data registries, and verifiable credentials – the building blocks that let teachers, third parties and AI build on a trusted digital education system.
- Sustainable investment depends on partnerships that go beyond initial project support: regulators enabling fair, competitive markets; Universal Service Funds evolving into long-term delivery vehicles; and whole-of-government ownership.
- Local language, cultural relevance and inclusion (children with disabilities, out-of-school children, emergencies) must be designed into both the connectivity and content layers from the start, not added later.

Key Outcomes of the Session

- Broad agreement that connectivity and DPI for education (Giga and Gateways) are complementary, not sequential, agendas – the "Yin and Yang" of digital education – and that their coming together, alongside deepening collaboration between ITU, UNICEF and UNESCO, marks a maturing of the joint approach.
- School connectivity must go beyond the last mile to the school and reach the classrooms and shared spaces where students learn and staff work. Only then, connectivity would turn into meaningful access; improving learning, strengthening school services and expanding opportunity for the wider community access.
- The session clarified what comes after connectivity: not additional devices or platforms layered on top, but a curriculum-mapped digital learning repository, built as public digital infrastructure and accessible to teachers, innovators and AI.

- Country examples (Mozambique, Kenya, Cambodia, South Africa) illustrated how connectivity and digital learning systems are being reframed as government-owned, whole-of-government priorities rather than isolated, donor-dependent projects.
- The Charter for Public Digital Learning Platforms was reaffirmed as the shared normative anchor linking the two agendas, framing digital learning content and platforms as public assets serving the public interest.

Key Recommendations and Forward-Looking Actions

- Plan connectivity and digital education systems as a single continuum: align Giga and Gateways investments from the outset, treating digital learning platforms as the natural evolution once schools are connected.
- Build on accurate, shared data – mapping existing initiatives and school-level needs – before designing new interventions, to avoid duplication and target investment where it matters most.
- Invest in digital learning content as public digital infrastructure: coded, curriculum-mapped, interoperable and accessible to AI and third-party developers, rather than isolated learning management systems.
- Measure success in people, not infrastructure: track lives changed, skills gained and jobs created, alongside schools connected.
- Strengthen multi-stakeholder, whole-of-government partnerships – regulators, private sector, development partners and local communities – to sustain both connectivity and content investments beyond initial project support.