15ᵗʰ ASEF Classroom Network Conference

Education for Sustainable Development and AI:
The Role and Readiness of Teachers

Tokyo, Japan | 25-29 November 2019

Concept Note

Co-organised by

ASIA-EUROPE FOUNDATION

UNIVERSITAS SEDIS SAPIENTIAE · SOPHIA ·

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of JAPAN

MEXT — MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, CULTURE, SPORTS, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY-JAPAN

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Topic Overview

Education is the most powerful means to raise awareness and knowledge about pressing global challenges that concern sustainability, amongst them climate change and global warming, environmental degradation, or demographic changes.

For more than two decades, UNESCO has been promoting Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) to ensure that generations of today and tomorrow grow up with the mindset to value and practice the habit of living sustainably from an early age on.[1] ESD envisions "a world where everyone has the opportunity to benefit from quality education and learn the values, behaviour and lifestyles required for a sustainable future and for positive societal transformation. ESD is a process of learning to make decisions that consider the long-term futures of the economy, ecology, and the equitable development of all communities."[2] Building up on the achievements of the ESD Decade (2005-2014), UNESCO introduced the Global Action Programme (GAP) to continue its crucial initiatives and work on sustainable development. Two of the top priorities of GAP are: 1) transforming learning and training environments and 2) building capacities of educators and trainers.[3]

Secondary-level education is an important stage for learners to develop relevant life skills and values as emphasised in ESD and the GAP initiative. As UNESCO highlights: "Secondary-level education needs to be much more than skills training or civics: it should be concerned with the holistic development and empowerment of the total human person in a societal context."[4] This however requires teachers to innovate the learning process in a way that is learner-centred, enquiry-based, real-world driven, more creative and that allows the students' engagement with local communities.

While the United Nations (UN) urge the integration of learning objectives of ESD into the school curricula, educators and education institutions also face the responsibility to prepare learners with the digital skills needed to succeed in today's rapidly transforming and highly connected digital societies.[5] To strive for this balance, education policy makers and learning experts suggest that latest EdTech tools could assist teachers to create timely relevant learning environments[6] that incorporate a strong understanding of ESD and teaching digital skills at the same time. In this context, emerging Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies are considered as the forefront EdTech tools that hold the power to profoundly reshape teaching and learning.[7] However, the use of AI in education involves both benefits and risks that not many teachers and education leaders are aware of. With the rapid development of AI, it is crucial to rethink the changing role of teachers and the use of AI in classrooms and beyond at all levels of education, especially at secondary-level education.

Embracing the significance and relevance of both ESD and the potential of AI today, the 15th ASEF ClassNet Conference will address the topic, "Education for Sustainable Development and AI: The Role and Readiness of Teachers."

ASEF ClassNet Conference

Launched in 1998, the ASEF Classroom Network (ASEF ClassNet) fosters collaborations among secondary and high school teachers and students in Asia and Europe, while harnessing the potential and opportunities of technology in education. To-date, more than 1,500 teachers from 49 ASEM Partner countries[7] have joined the ASEF Classroom Network. In addition, more than 32,000 students have been engaged in 398 school-to-school collaborations since 2001.

The 15th ASEF ClassNet Conference

The 15th ASEF ClassNet Conference (ASEF ClassNet15) will take place at Sophia University in Tokyo, Japan from 25-29 November 2019. Both the hosting country and the host institution have been selected based on their strong engagement with the theme: Japan is known for leading international discussions on ESD as it hosted the World UNESCO Conference on ESD in 2014 and played a crucial role in promoting the Global Action Programme (GAP).[8] In fact, prior to the formulation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 Agenda Japan has been already actively reforming the nature of its national strategies at all sectors to build sustainable societies.[9] With a solid focus on ESD in its national education framework, the country now supports and encourages its schools to develop teaching methods and education projects that enable the teaching and learning of global sustainability issues.[10] Sophia University, as the local host of the conference, is a leading higher education institution

that focuses on advocating and promoting ESD[11] and a pioneer for promoting global education and internationalisation in Japan.[12]

The ASEF ClassNet15 Conference will focus on the theme, "Education for Sustainable Development and AI: The Role and Readiness of Teachers" and will address three key questions:

- What roles do teachers need to play in classrooms to transform teaching and learning practices for ESD in the AI era?
- What level of knowledge on ESD and AI do teachers need to develop appropriate pedagogies?
- What kind of capacity building and partnership support do teachers need to integrate ESD meaningfully in the school curriculum and to enhance their readiness for the AI era?

ASEF ClassNet15 will promote a deeper discussion on ESD and provide a brief introduction on emerging AI technologies in education. The conference will facilitate a robust action-oriented dialogue on ESD, AI, and the role and readiness of teachers by providing a multi stakeholder platform for secondary/high schools and vocational school teachers, researchers, policy makers and EdTech leaders to:

- Raise awareness and create knowledge of the topic "Education for Sustainable Development and AI: The Role and Readiness of Teachers" as an integrative element in teaching and learning in secondary, high, and vocational school education, through case-studies and practical tools
- Contribute to teacher professionalisation by building capacity through training
- Encourage schools to join an active Asia-Europe network of schools and support each other for creating holistic and timely relevant future learning environments
- Gather feedback from teachers to suggest policy recommendations to education policy makers and governments to integrate ESD into the school curriculum with the help of AI tools
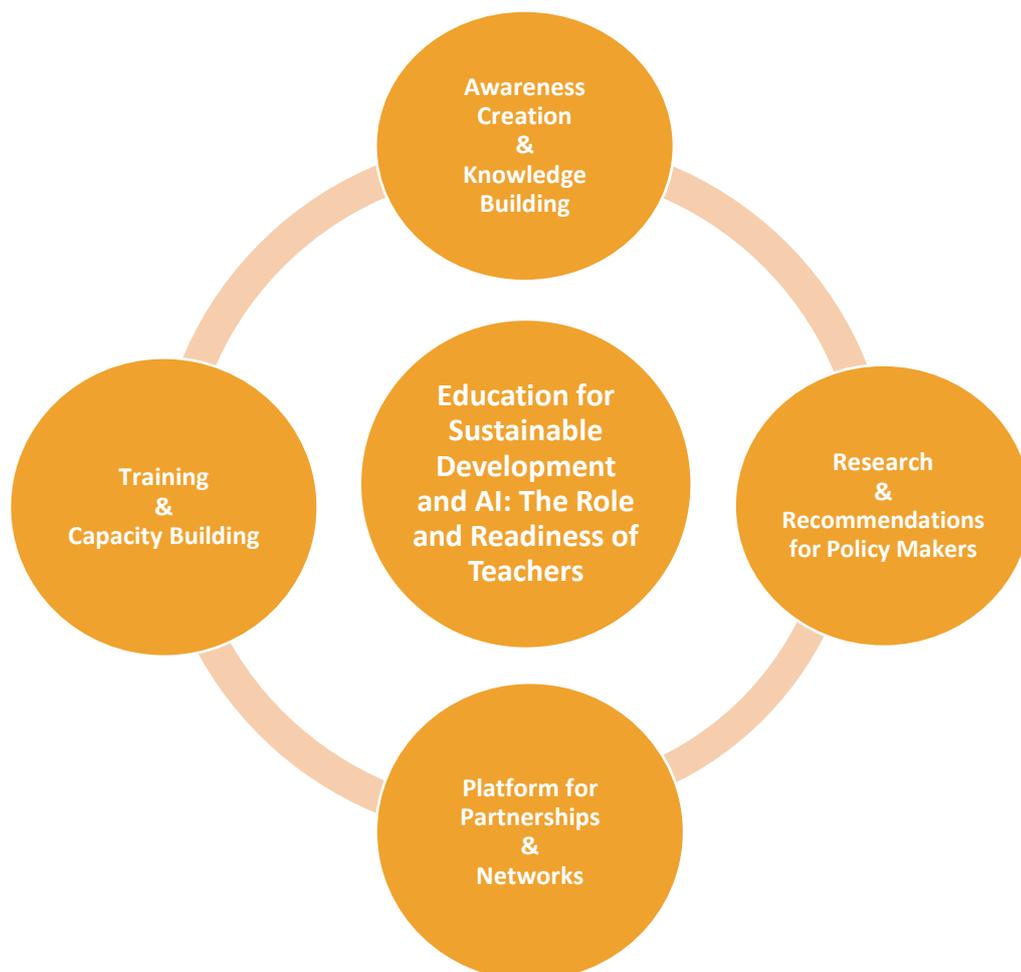
Figure: Theme and Framework for the 15th ASEF ClassNet Conference

1 See the UNESCO Report (2017) on *Education for Sustainable Development Goals: Learning Objectives*:
https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000247444
2 See the report by UNESCO IBE: http://www.ibe.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ESD_training_guidelines_-3.pdf
3 See the UNESCO article on GAP: https://en.unesco.org/gap/priority-action-areas
4 See pg. 13, the UNESCO report on *Secondary Education Reform: Towards a Convergence of Knowledge Acquisition and Skills Development*: http://www.unesco.org/education/posit_paper.PDF
5 See the OECD report on *The Future of Education and Skills: Education 2030:*
https://www.oecd.org/education/2030/E2030%20Position%20Paper%20(05.04.2018).pdf
6 See 2016 OECD report on *Innovating Education and Educating for Innovation: The Power of Digital Technologies and Skills*: http://www.oecd.org/education/ceri/GEIS2016-Background-document.pdf
7 See ASEM Partners List: https://www.aseminfoboard.org/about/partners
8 See the UNESCO Aichi-Nagoya Declaration on ESD:
https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/5859Aichi-Nagoya_Declaration_EN.pdf
9 See the report by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan on *Japan's Voluntary National Review: Report on the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals*: https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000287390.pdf
10 UNESCO Schools, *Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in Japan*: http://www.unesco-school.mext.go.jp/eng/esd/
11 Sophia University, Sophia Programme for Sustainable Future:
https://www.sophia.ac.jp/eng/program/undergraduate_c/spsf/index.html
12 About Sophia University: https://www.sophia.ac.jp/eng/global/index.html

Organised by

The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) promotes understanding, strengthens relationships and facilitates cooperation among the people, institutions and organisations of Asia and Europe. ASEF enhances dialogue, enables exchanges and encourages collaboration across the thematic areas of culture, education, governance, sustainable development, economy, public health and media.

ASEF is an intergovernmental not-for-profit organisation located in Singapore. Founded in 1997, it is the only institution of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM).

ASEF runs more than 25 projects a year, consisting of around 100 activities, mainly conferences, seminars, workshops, lectures, publications, and online platforms, together with about 125 partner organisations. Each year over 3,000 Asians and Europeans participate in ASEF's activities, and much wider audiences are reached through its various events, networks, and web-portals.

For more information, please visit www.ASEF.org

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Sophia University, located in the centre of Tokyo, is a private Catholic university founded in 1913 by the Jesuits. It is a comprehensive university with 9 undergraduate and 10 graduate schools based on its educational philosophy:" Men and Women for Others, with Others" recognizing the human dignity with appreciation of diverse values and cultures. Sophia established the first English-taught program in Japan in 1949 and nowadays, it has 350 overseas partner institutions from 72 different countries as one of the Top Global University Project in Japan. Sophia provides full-degree programs taught in English in Liberal Arts, Green Science and Technology, Global Studies, Global Environmental Studies, TESOL and Education. From 2020, Sophia will launch the new English-taught Sophia Program for Sustainable Futures (SPSF).

For more information, please visit www.sophia.ac.jp/eng/

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (MOFA) attaches importance to developing the networking with Asian and European countries. In this regard, MOFA considers the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) as an important informal platform to foster exchanges and cooperation especially on connectivity between Asia and Europe. From this perspective, MOFA has been supporting activities of the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) especially in the field of public health and people-to-people exchanges, such as the ASEF Public Health Network 10th Anniversary Event (Tokyo, May 2018), the 3rd ASEF Young Leaders Summit (Brussels, October 2018), and the Asia-Europe Environment Forum (Yokohama, July 2019).

For more information, please visit https://www.mofa.go.jp/

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) is responsible for education in Japan. MEXT has cooperated with ASEF, especially in education and strongly supports the 15th ClassNet conference in Tokyo. The Secretariat of the Japanese National Commission for UNESCO is established in MEXT. As Japan being the country that proposed the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014), MEXT places special emphasis on promoting ESD, capitalizing on over 1,000 UNESCO Associated Schools in Japan.

For more information, please visit http://www.mext.go.jp/en/

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Visual Concept

The "Fortune Teller" has gone by a variety of names across cultures, for example cootie catcher, salt cellars or paku-paku. It used to be a popular paper game and was even played to get answers about the future. The player had 2 moves and 4 choices to come to one of 8 possible pictures or messages about the future.

Times have changed. From human imagination and "Fortunes Tellers", we have shifted to creative human minds and "Artificial Intelligence (AI)" to foresee the future. 2 moves, 4 choices and 8 scenarios have now become 1s, 0s and millions of possibilities.

Which moves and choices do we make out of these millions to design our sustainable future?