

Terms of reference

<i>Job Opening number</i>	:	21-Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights-149399-Consultant
<i>Job Title</i>	:	Consultant on digitization of education
<i>General Expertise</i>	:	Human Rights
<i>Category</i>	:	Other
<i>Department/ Office</i>	:	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
<i>Organizational Unit</i>	:	OHCHR

Duties and Responsibilities

Under the guidance of the Unit Coordinator of Justice, Protection and Social Rights Unit in the Special Procedures Branch of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), as well as the Special Rapporteur on the right to education, the consultant will be responsible for undertaking thematic research on the digitization of education and to assist in organizing experts' consultations.

The consultant will assist the Special Rapporteur by identifying risks and opportunities of the digitization of education, with regard to the realization of the right to education, in addition to best practices and recommendations to States and other stakeholders. The consultant will undertake thematic research and draft a background note of about 30 / 40 pages, which will inform the 2022 report of the Special Rapporteur to the Human Rights Council.

The consultant will also participate in experts meeting to be organized by the Special Rapporteur on the issue, and assist in designing the format and identifying possible participants to such meetings. S/he will also ensure that the outcomes of the debates will be reflected in the final background note, together with responses to the questionnaire sent to all stakeholders.

The tasks shall be undertaken in close cooperation with the Special Rapporteur and her team at OHCHR, with whom the consultant should remain in regular communication. The consultant will discuss with them the scope of the research, and the content and structure of the background paper at the beginning of the consultancy.

A first preliminary version of the background paper shall be shared with the Special Rapporteur and her team at OHCHR by 30 June 2021, to allow time for early discussion of the draft and possible adjustments as required. The final background paper shall be submitted by 30 November 2021.

The research paper will contain the following issues.

Overarching questions:

- What do we mean by digital education?
- What do we know about the advantages and disadvantages of digital education? Why would digital education be better for education, in which circumstances and at which conditions, at which cost for

whom?

- Which guarantees / principles should be implemented to ensure that the digitization of education does not jeopardize, but rather fosters, the implementation of the right to quality and inclusive education for all, as well as human rights within education systems?

Points to be addressed (indicative list):

- Analysis of trends and methods that may be used to provide digital education in its various dimensions, in particular as a means to:

- o Provide distance learning, but also to introduce digital tools within educational institutions, with or without the presence of education workers, at all levels
- o Provide learning in all relevant disciplines, to teach how to use digital tools and contents (issue of mis/disinformation), but also to master these tools and understand the architecture behind them
- o Provide specific professional training and education and allow business enterprises to develop their own certification processes and recruit professionals
- o Address crises but also as a permanent feature / modality of education in normal times

- Analysis of the elements proving, or tending to prove, that the digitization of education provides new opportunities for a better implementation of the right to education, and if so in which circumstances. For example:

- o Use of digital education in times of crisis such as pandemics, conflicts and natural disasters, allowing the pursuit of education in safe conditions
- o Development of new and effective pedagogical tools
- o Gathering data to evaluate the implementation of the right to education
- o Allowing access to a wider diversity of sources and worldviews
- o Providing true digital education, allowing learners to understand the architecture behind digital tools, to access and assess sources of information, to protect their privacy, to manage data, to develop critical thinking including towards digital media and tools, and to programme and tailor digital tools to their own needs (citizens vs. consumers)
- o Ensuring that educational institutions are well equipped to compete with social networks through delivering quality information and education to learners.
- o Opening new possibilities for long-life learning

- Analysis of the elements proving, or tending to prove, that the digitization of education does not provide new opportunities for a better implementation of the right to education, or to the contrary, jeopardizes such implementation and if so in which circumstances. For example:

- o Rising inequalities, when resort to distance digital education exacerbates inequalities in access to education, along the lines of the digital divide, which is dependent upon, inter alia, geographical location (poor countries, rural areas...), economic status, gender, ethnic origin and disability.
- o The importance of face-to-face vs. distance learning. Should the digital divide be remedied, would digitization be beneficial to the implementation of the right to education? What are the achievements of "free-screen" schools that have developed over the years in various countries?
- o The effects of gamification. Development of pedagogical tools that do not sufficiently develop learners' capacity to make efforts and enhance their concentration capacities
- o Excessive standardization of learning tools and contents, leading inter alia to curtailing academic freedom and freedom to teach, at all levels; restricting creative and critical spirit of learners and education workers; and further enhancing the primacy of English and other dominant languages and

cultural expressions

- o "Datafication" of educational life, including the question of the ownership of the data and their use for the public good, for example by academics and researchers.
- o Acceleration of the commodification of education and massive arrival of private actors in educational institutions through digital technology, with possible long-term impact of private commercial actors on the content of education
- o Reduction of public financing of education through the development of PPPs and reduced investments in building schools and hiring teachers, at all levels
- o Increase of intellectual property rights on educational content and data.

• Analysis of other risks due to the digitization of education. For example:

- o Privacy and surveillance of learners and education workers.
- o Online security of children and other learners
- o Development, social and health related issues, with regards to digital education including the use of screens, in particular for children (less play, less sport, less face-to-face social interactions, sleep disorders, eye problems, etc.)
- o Further development of advertising and marketing practices within educational institutions, at all levels, including to foster future use of digital technologies promoted as being necessary to live a life with dignity, with no other possible.

• Which guarantees / principles should be implemented to ensure that the digitization of education does not jeopardize, but rather fosters, the implementation of the right to quality and inclusive education for all? For example:

- o Political
- o Legislative
- o Programmatic, including in terms of funding
- o Teachers' training and development
- o Participation of teachers in decision-making and in the design of digital education
- o Example of good practices

• Analysis of States' obligations

• Examples of best practices

• Recommendations to States and other stakeholders.

Ultimate result of service

Final background note of 30-40 pages.

Title & ID number of programme/project

Is any other department or office of the Secretariat or any other organization of the United Nations involved in similar work to the best of your knowledge?

No

Travel Details

Outputs/Work Assignment

Output 1: Submission of a detailed outline and a proposed list of participants for the experts' meetings to be held online in the course of 2021, by 30 April 2021.

Output 2: Submission of a draft background note, to be discussed with the Special Rapporteur, by 30 June 2021.

Output 3: Submission of the final background note, implementing comments by the Special Rapporteur as well as responses to the questionnaire, by 30 November 2021.

Output 4: Participation in the 6 experts' meetings to be organized in May, June, September, October and November, and contribution to reviewing the report of the Special Rapporteur based on the outcomes of the experts' meetings.

Expected Duration

From 1 April to 30 November 2021 (actual work period will be from 1 April to 30 June 2021, and from 1 September to 30 November 2021).

Evaluation Criteria

Academic Qualifications : Advanced degree in law, political science, international relations, social sciences, development or other disciplines related to the mandate.

Experience : Knowledge/experience of issues relating to digitization of education is an asset.

Language : Fluency in English is required. French and/or Spanish is an asset.