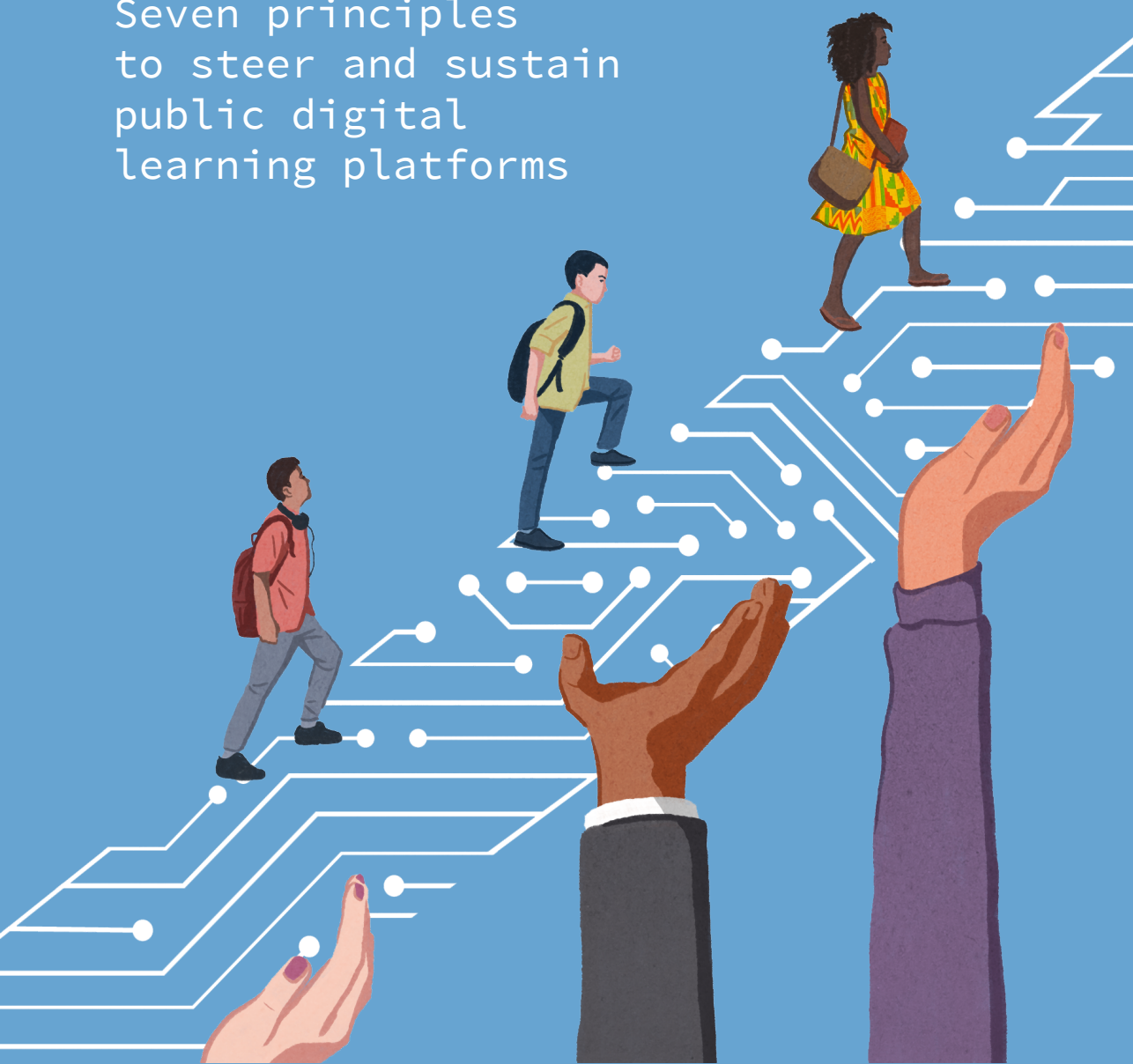
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Charter for Public Digital Learning Platforms

Seven principles to steer and sustain public digital learning platforms



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Preamble

Education is a fundamental human right and a public good.

As a human right, education must be free, universal, non-discriminatory, and directed towards the full development of individuals and their societies. As a public good, education must serve public purposes, be organized in public spaces, and be accountable to the public.

In a digital and AI age, education is increasingly supported and complemented in digital environments.

This Charter calls on governments to be attentive to these digital environments. It encourages them to establish, improve, and sustain digital learning platforms that uphold and support education as a human right and a public good, in concert with schools and other essential institutions and infrastructures dedicated to education.

What are public digital learning platforms?

Public digital learning platforms are integral components of wider systems of education.

Similarly to physical schools – with their quality-controlled learning resources, prioritization of safety and well-being, and designs and operations to facilitate equitable education – public digital learning platforms are spaces that bring together content, technology, people, and learning activities. They help learners learn and teachers teach. While digital learning platforms are not replacements for schools and education conducted face-to-face with teachers, they are necessary complements to schooling – and vital branches of public education. They are digital commons dedicated to strengthening education as a human right and a public good.

Why are public digital learning platforms necessary?

The rationale for public digital learning platforms is simple: high quality education needs to be supported in digital as well as in physical spaces. The average time that people, and young people in particular, spend online and on screens has climbed every year for the past two decades. Connected technology is common in school and home life around the world. Given this reality, there need to be safe harbours for education on these screens – digital destinations where learners, teachers, parents, and wider communities can learn and grow. These destinations must treat education as it is – or should be – treated elsewhere: as an essential social service that is guaranteed by governments and accountable to the public.

While some countries build and sustain robust public digital learning platforms, many others do not. Because of capacity and resource constraints and limited precedents for the development and continuity of public interest technology, hundreds of millions of learners and teachers live in countries or communities that are not served by *any* public digital learning platforms. In other contexts, learners and teachers are confronted with public platforms that are inconsistently maintained, contain limited or low quality learning resources, lack interactive features, and can be difficult to navigate and use. This leaves a vacuum that is commonly filled by private sector actors whose business models can sit uneasily with the aims of education as a public good.

Today, many of the most widely used digital platforms in education are developed and delivered by private and for-profit corporations. Some of these platforms were originally designed not for pedagogical purposes and educational growth, but rather workplace productivity, general communication, or user engagement. While these tools have introduced important innovations and are often valued by teachers and learners, they can simultaneously introduce barriers to access; treat learners and teachers as consumers; establish long-term technical dependencies and budgetary obligations; expose users to health, safety, and privacy risks; and threaten the autonomy and sovereignty of education systems.

Going forward, public needs and public purposes must steer the development and operation of digital learning platforms. Education conducted in digital spaces is too important to rely on market forces alone. This does not discount important roles for private sector actors, but strong accountability mechanisms are needed to align private sector contributions with the broader goals of equity, quality, and inclusion in education.

In a digital and AI age, public digital learning platforms can ensure that education will be supported in virtual spaces and offer resources and functionalities that help education systems fulfil their missions. In addition to benefitting schools, these platforms can assist a wide range of education providers, including universities, libraries, museums, private institutions, faith-based organizations, homes, and vocational schools. While public digital learning platforms are not designed to substitute for in-person school education, they occasionally offer 'only option' links to educational opportunities for learners who temporarily cannot access schools whether because of displacement, conflict, disease, natural disasters, or other urgent and short-term situations.

With so many learners, teachers, and parents already immersed in digital spaces and able to benefit from digital services, public digital learning platforms are now 'need to have' components of education, rather than 'nice to have' components. These platforms must uphold the priorities of inclusion, equal learning opportunities, safety, and holistic well-being that guide the operation of schools and other public institutions dedicated to the public mission of education.

Aims of the Charter

This Charter seeks to help guide the development and improvement of public digital learning platforms that support, extend, and enrich education.

It proposes seven broad principles that education authorities can use to clarify the objectives of digital learning platforms. It also puts forward suggestions regarding the design, operation, and governance of these platforms.

The Charter places a primary focus on the role of digital learning platforms as complements to primary and secondary level education, and a lesser focus on platforms that open non-formal lifelong learning opportunities or complement tertiary, vocational, or professional education.

The principles serve as signposts, rather than prescriptive 'how to' guides. Given the diversity of educational contexts in the world, it will be up to educational authorities at national, provincial, and municipal levels to determine how these principles are interpreted and applied in practice, and in ways that reflect local needs, capacities, priorities, and objectives.

Seven principles

This Charter recommends and explains seven principles to help public sector authorities make informed choices about the design, development, provision, and enhancement of public digital learning platforms.

The principles are grounded in a vision that digital learning platforms should:

- help uphold and fulfil the human right to education;
- be governed as digital public goods; and
- strengthen inclusion, equity, safety, and quality across education systems.

Each principle is elaborated with sub-points that provide additional guidance to leaders and teams responsible for the development and oversight of public digital learning platforms.

The principles help define and establish a common language to support discussions and policies about digital learning platforms that support public education.

Without question, technological advancements in AI, virtual and augmented reality, quantum computing, neurotech, and other frontier areas will alter understandings of what public digital learning platforms are, how they work, and what they might or should become. While the technologies that comprise digital learning platforms will continue to evolve, the need for well-recognized and trusted digital hubs for public education will remain. The principles shared here are intended to provide orientation and direction to governments as they debate when, how, and towards what ends to integrate novel technologies into educational platforms.

Principle 1: Public

1.1 Public good: Public digital learning platforms (PDLPs) embody and reinforce the principle that education is a public good and a human right, not a market-driven commodity. They serve the collective as well as individual aims of education.

1.2 Public governance: PDLPs are controlled or closely overseen by public authorities who are accountable to the public. Governance models treat PDLPs as public infrastructure, including, and perhaps especially, in instances when commercial actors are involved in the development or provision of PDLPs.

1.3 Public financing: With rare exception, PDLPs are largely or fully financed with consistent and sustainable streams of public revenue. Platforms funded and controlled by the public will serve the public interest aims of education. While public financing is the foundation of PDLPs, complementary and carefully regulated partnerships with civil society, private sector, and development partners can contribute to the enhancement of platforms and facilitate the sustainable integration of new features, options, and innovations.

1.4 Data sovereignty and stewardship: Data generated through PDLPs remain under national jurisdiction and public control. Information about learners and teachers is sensitive. It must be stored, processed, and governed in line with national and subnational laws and treated in ways that protect privacy by default. When third parties are involved, clear agreements are needed to uphold public ownership, access, and long-term stewardship of data resources.

1.5 Skilled teams of civil servants: Governments make long-term investments in the people and institutional arrangements required to build, maintain, and improve PDLPs. This means recruiting, training, and continuously developing the capacities of skilled technical and pedagogical professionals within public institutions. A platform is only as strong as the human teams behind it. Programmes and mechanisms to build a civil service that can oversee and steer platforms in the public interest are as important as the platform itself.

Principle 2: Inclusive

2.1 Supporting opportunities for all: PDLPs aspire to benefit all end users – primarily learners and teachers – but also parents and education authorities. Asking how platforms will work for teachers in remote areas and for children living in poverty, helps direct and prioritize design and development decisions. Inclusion and an ethic of 'for all' should be guiding lights for PDLPs.

2.2 Multilingual design: Learners should have the ability to learn in their own language. Research has underscored the importance of mother tongue instruction, especially in the early years of education. PDLPs support languages relevant in the national and subnational contexts where they are used. Historically, providing multilingual options has been prohibitively expensive, but automated translation tools, while imperfect, have eased the financial burden considerably and made it more realistic to better support a variety of languages. This approach is consistent with the UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace, which encourages governments to support linguistic diversity and equitable access to knowledge in digital environments.

2.3 Accessible for learners with disabilities: Approximately one in six people globally live with a disability. PDLPs adhere to internationally recognized accessibility standards, such as the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines published by the World Wide Web Consortium and the Universal Design for Learning framework. Compliance with these guidelines and frameworks, or related ones, will help ensure that education content is perceivable, operable, and understandable for all users.

2.4 Culturally relevant: PDLPs should reflect, respect, and represent the cultural identities of the learners, teachers, and families they serve. There is no shortage of digital learning content that assumes users are embedded in Western and anglophone cultures and contexts. PDLPs can break this default mode by curating content that is more locally relevant and by helping users learn about and contribute to local knowledge and belief systems. Digital technologies and digital learning applications are sometimes understood as tools that enable cultural homogenization or even cultural colonialization, but these outcomes are not inevitable. When developed and deployed with care, PDLPs can buttress and synergize cultural and knowledge diversity.

2.5 Compatible with the technologies people have: Ideally, all users of a PDLP would have cutting-edge hardware, high bandwidth connectivity, and no restraints on data consumption. This is almost never the reality. PDLPs should, to the extent possible, run smoothly on low-cost hardware and accommodate intermittent and low bandwidth connectivity. They should also provide options to download resources so that they can be accessed repeatedly, even if users are not connected to the internet. Some of the most impactful PDLPs are custom-designed to function smoothly on low-cost smartphones rather than larger-screen and higher-performance tablets, laptops, or desktop computers. Overall, PDLPs try to open portals to learning through technologies that people already own or can realistically get, whether independently or through public provision.

2.6 Works with the digital skills people have: Well-designed PDLPs help people with limited digital skills find and benefit from educational content. Platforms should not expect teachers and learners to develop sophisticated digital competencies before being able to benefit from them. They should also avoid undue dependencies on corporate digital ecosystems and the specialized knowledge these ecosystems demand from users. When PDLPs succeed in establishing entry points for people with limited digital skills, it tends to propel a virtuous cycle: learning is accelerated and users get opportunities to become more comfortable accessing and navigating digital spaces for education, while gradually strengthening their digital skills over time.

Principle 3: Pedagogical

3.1 Teacher led: PDLPs give teachers flexibility and expanded options to facilitate student learning in diverse contexts. The content, presentation, design, and functionalities of platforms should give teachers greater control over education. PDLPs that try to dictate the actions and choices of teachers wrongly strip the professionals closest to students of the agency and autonomy they need to do their jobs. Effective platforms empower teachers and give them powerful tools to connect with students and improve learning outcomes.

3.2 Balances guidance and independent exploration: PDLPs both guide learners and let them explore ideas and topics on their own. 'Ask me anything' and 'go anywhere' AI bots are increasingly understood as promising plug-ins or 'machine tutors' for PDLPs. But these automated, amoral, and largely user-directed technologies, while aids for some educational and knowledge tasks, need to be complemented with structured content and tools that help learners make progress in curricular areas. Users of PDLPs need opportunities to both lead their own learning and to be led.

3.3 Pedagogically diverse: PDLPs are not dominated by one didactic model and strive to integrate multiple pedagogical approaches. These could include, for example, constructivist and experiential learning, direct instruction and behaviourist approaches, Socratic dialogue, and critical reflection. These approaches and their application in digital learning platforms should be guided by educational research, findings from learning sciences, local practices, and user preferences and feedback.

3.4 Learning together and learning alone: PDLPs facilitate the education of individuals, groups, and even whole societies and countries, and, in doing so, help humanity live and thrive together. Because many commercial digital learning tools are aimed at individual consumers, they have, arguably, overemphasized personalization. There is evidence to suggest that AI and other adaptive learning systems that aim to adjust instruction to a learner's level can enhance learning. There is, at the same time, evidence that in-person and group-based learning is often more effective and fosters important social and communication skills that can be difficult to quantify and measure. A PDLP that overemphasizes personalization risks subverting the collective and public purposes of education. There is value in cohorts studying common topics, reading similar books, and discussing ideas in teacher-led groups. Platforms should strive to advance education as both a collective and an individual endeavour and maximize opportunities for conversation, cooperation, and collaboration between people without heavy automation or prescriptions from non-human bots.

3.5 Humility about what education and learning digital environments can support: The teams and authorities behind PDLPs are mindful of the educational and pedagogical limitations of digital environments. While there is much digital learning platforms can do to benefit learners, teachers, and others involved in education, there is a great deal they cannot do – or cannot do nearly as well as learners and teachers coming together in-person at schools. Off screen and hybrid learning support a far wider range of pedagogical practices and educational objectives than learning conducted exclusively through a screen – and often with superior results.

Principle 4: Complementary

4.1 Reinforcing: Too many existing educational platforms seek to replace or circumnavigate teachers and in-person institutions of public education. A primary function of PDLPs is to support teachers and strengthen education provided in physical and face-to-face learning environments while expanding the reach of these environments. The relationship between educators and PDLPs should be symbiotic. Platforms should recognize and reinforce the professional agency of teachers and school leaders, not undermine it.

4.2 Part of a larger whole: PDLPs exist to help advance the holistic aims and aspirations societies set for public education. They should be understood as integral components of wider systems of public education, not standalone 'products'. They contribute to – and work in concert with – wider education ecosystems that extend well beyond digital services.

4.3 Integrated with digital public infrastructure: Looking beyond education, PDLPs are branches of wider and deeper digital public infrastructure (DPI) that serve public needs across sectors. Digital learning platforms should integrate with systems for digital identity, payment systems, and data exchange, and others. Embedding PDLPs within national DPI frameworks helps ensure sustainability, scalability, and coherence with other public digital services.

4.4 Embedded in policy: PDLPs should be embedded in and complementary to national education policy frameworks, including those related to curriculum, teacher development, assessment, accreditation, equity, and inclusion, and resource management. Just as schools are deeply embedded in almost all policy frameworks concerning education, so too should PDLPs.

4.5 Synchronized: Planning, budgeting, and reporting cycles connected to PDLPs should be aligned to existing school calendars, and, when relevant, timelines tied to other essential public services. This will help guarantee sustainability beyond single

budgetary cycles and assure responsibility and accountability beyond single political terms. PDLPs need to be treated as main branches of education systems and key components of wider social programmes and services.

4.6 Cohesive and coherent: PDLPs should fill distinct needs and provide resources and services that are understood by teachers, learners, families, policy-makers, and others involved in education. If there are multiple PDLPs in a single national or subnational context, they should have distinct purposes, users, and functions. When PDLPs offer overlapping services, this creates unnecessary confusion – and splinters government investments. Ideally, PDLPs will reduce fragmentation and redundancies and help an education system operate in a cohesive and coherent manner.

4.7 Recognized: Successful PDLPs are known. They should be as familiar to average people as the names and locations of long-operating local schools. Clustering diverse digital education content and services under a single platform improves its recognition. While there can be good reasons to establish several PDLPs, this practice can also create fragmentation and unnecessary confusion from a user perspective: people forget which platform is for what purposes and for whom. Just as commercial providers tend to keep digital services under a single digital roof to improve recognition and engagement, so too can governments. The constant renaming and rebranding of PDLPs, often triggered by political and administrative changes within a country, usually muddies recognition. Building and committing to one PDLP for education helps bolster its visibility, use, and impact.

Principle 5: Open

5.1 Connected and interoperable systems: PDLPs should function as connected and interoperable systems where different services within a platform link with and reinforce other services. Systems used for assessments should, for example, help teachers locate relevant content and lesson plans to address areas of strength and weakness. Today, many platforms consist of stand-alone applications that rarely 'talk to' each other, forcing learners, teachers, and school leaders to enter and locate redundant information across multiple systems. PDLPs should prioritize interconnections that enable secure data exchange and create a seamless experiences for users.

5.2 Modular architecture: PDLPs should be built from modular digital components that are standards-based and secure by design. These building blocks can include services such as identity systems, content repositories, or credentialing platforms that support multiple education services. A modular architecture allows individual components of larger systems and platforms to be improved or replaced over time

without rebuilding entire systems. This approach reduces duplication and costs, minimizes vendor lock-in, and helps governments maintain long-term control over their digital education infrastructure. Procurement policies should prioritize compliance with modular and interoperable architecture to ensure that platforms can evolve, link, integrate new services, and avoid dependency on proprietary solutions.

5.3 Open licensing: PDLPs should apply open licenses to content and software, following the principles set out in UNESCO's Recommendation on Open Educational Resources. This enables resources to be reused, adapted, and shared across institutions and, if desired, countries. Open licenses help reduce costs and simplify integration. When learning content on PDLPs is openly licensed, it can be shared, reused, and remixed by teachers and others, according to their needs. Governments should encourage educational institutions and teachers to develop, adapt, and share open educational resources.

5.4 Open by design: PDLPs should be open to as many users as possible, including users who may decline to establish profiles with email addresses, phone numbers, birthdays, national identification numbers, passwords, or other identifying information. Logging-in to an educational platform can enhance personalization options, enable interactions with other users, and offer expanded functionality, but this action should not be required to access learning content. One of the great strengths of PDLPs is the ability to accommodate large numbers of users at a relatively low cost and without limiting content to users with certain credentials. The doors to PDLPs should be wide open. An education system with platforms that reach large numbers of teachers, learners, and parents is an education system with wider reach. PDLPs will always have to balance safety and security with openness, but an ethic of openness should be a default stance.

Principle 6: Focused

6.1 Start small: As a rule, the teams developing PDLPs should set one or two realistic goals to address educational needs and achieve them before moving to other goals. Many successful PDLPs begin life as simple repositories for electronic versions of textbooks and other teaching and learning materials. These repositories can establish a commonsense point of departure for the development of more sophisticated learning content and functionalities, since digital development teams that cannot build a well-organized repository of educational content will struggle to introduce more advanced resources and features. Additionally, teams that open too many – or overly complex – developmental fronts scatter their energies and lose sight of core priorities. While development is most successful when it has a limited and achievable scope, the teams building PDLPs should try to anticipate future needs and tailor the

platform architecture accordingly. PDLPs built on sturdy technical foundations are easier to expand and adapt over time.

6.2 Support teachers: Many of the most impactful PDLPs serve teachers exclusively. Supporting teachers is one of the most effective ways to improve public education, especially in low-resource contexts where large numbers of learners do not have access to devices or in contexts where devices are widely used and can distract learners and detract from sustained learning. Building PDLPs that help teachers and respect teacher agency sends a signal that human professionals, not automated digital systems, are responsible for education.

6.3 Empower parents: While most PDLPs are aimed directly at teachers or learners, platforms that help parents and other caregivers support education in the home can be highly beneficial. Governments and families alike are rightfully concerned about children and youth spending excessive time immersed in digital environments – environments that provide portals to learning but tend to be immediately adjacent to entertainment and other content that is less demanding than education and may not be age or culturally appropriate. Aiming educational resources at parents and keeping them informed about education empowers families to engage children in learning that can be more social and more educative than screen-based activities. Such resources can also help parents model and normalize healthy relationships with connected technology for education as well as other purposes.

6.4 Guided by needs, not technological novelty: There are often pressures to integrate new technologies into digital learning platforms. This can help catalyse innovation, but these pressures should not guide platform development. Needs should. A lot of what technology does can be done much better by teachers and other humans and often at a lower cost. For example, is it advisable for learners to discuss a book they read with an AI chatbot when they can discuss the same book with a teacher and peers face-to-face in a physical classroom? Options to incorporate novel technologies and functionalities in PDLPs should be scrutinized based on how well or how poorly they are likely to address educational priorities. There are good reasons to avoid rushing the rollout of new – and often untested and poorly understood – technologies in PDLPs. Children participating in compulsory education are not subjects for experiments with unproven technology.

6.5 Steered by data: Feedback loops and design iteration are what keep PDLPs relevant, beneficial, user-friendly, and safe. PDLPs should responsibly gather information about how users – and specific groups of users – interact with different content and features and how these interactions impact learning outcomes. This should be done with appropriate safeguards for privacy, security, and consent. Information should be anonymized by default, shared for research purposes, and

used to generate insights that can help guide educational improvement at classroom, institutional, and system levels.

Principle 7: Trustworthy

7.1 Accurate: Good PDLPs tirelessly quality control the accuracy of content, including content generated by AI models. The internet has plenty of 'slop' – shallow, unverified, sensational, irrelevant, misleading, and low-quality content. PDLPs should keep it out. While governments should carefully vet, test, and stand behind all content, technology, and protocols used in PDLPs, this process is not always failproof. Mechanisms should exist that allow users to safely flag and object to non-factual, non-educational, or overtly partisan or ideological content, as well as any technical problems that they might encounter. Platforms should respond promptly and effectively to user feedback and make corrections, adjustments, and improvements where necessary.

7.2 Reliable: In digital environments, reliability is an important component of trust. Platforms need to work – ideally, every minute of every day. Just as school officials endeavour to keep schools open through challenges large and small, officials overseeing public digital infrastructure should do the same for PDLPs. This means proactively protecting against cyberattacks as well as more benign problems that might arise. It also means developing plans and processes to confront foreseeable difficulties. Disruptions to a platform's core functions should be exceedingly rare. Even a few hours or minutes of service denial undermines user trust and confidence. Keeping platforms online and operational should be a point of pride for the teams and organizations responsible for PDLPs.

7.3 Age appropriate: A learner's age and developmental stage matters in digital spaces, just as it does in offline environments. PDLPs need to adjust their design, safeguards, and usage expectations to accommodate students at different stages of development. A PDLP supporting a 7-year-old is likely to present very different content, design, and functionalities than a PDLP supporting a 17-year-old. Sometimes platforms may even steer learners away from digital experiences altogether or keep these experiences limited in scope and duration. An established and growing body of evidence indicates that prolonged screen time can be harmful to education and the development of children and youth. PDLPs should seek to respect and balance the time that children are expected to engage in digital experiences and the time they are expected to spend offline and offscreen, participating in activities like play, in-person socializing, physical sports, handiwork, arts, music, and collective cultural activities – pursuits that are of special importance for the development and learning of children.

7.4 Responsible stewards of data: User data is sensitive and should be treated with the utmost care. It should never be accessible to third parties or be used for commercial purposes. A lot of digital data collection is superfluous and does not need to be tied to individuals. PDLPs should only gather data that serves clear and compelling educational purposes. As a rule, data collected about users should never be used for punitive actions. It should, rather, support and advance learning. All PDLPs should provide plain-language explanations of what data is captured, why it is collected, and how it is protected. Trustworthy PDLPs require secure and resilient systems, so that content, data, and platform services are protected from manipulation, misuse, unauthorized access, and disruption.

7.5 Data governance and accountability: PDLPs should operate within clear governance frameworks defining roles, responsibilities, and accountability mechanisms for data collection, processing, and sharing. Transparent data policies – including consent, retention, anonymization, and third-party access – are essential to preserve public trust and enable responsible use of education data for research and innovation. Strong governance and cybersecurity practices are necessary to ensure that data is handled lawfully, securely, and consistently over time, and that responsibility for data stewardship remains clearly assigned.

7.6 No small print: End users of PDLPs should not be burdened with prompts asking them to review and agree to lengthy terms and conditions. Consent of this sort tends to present a false choice, especially if it concerns participation in digital services that support public and compulsory education. With so many users and families depending on access to platforms, there is no place or need for small print. Governments assume responsibility for the safety and security of schools, and they should do the same for PDLPs. There is limited rationale for forcing this responsibility onto individual users and their families.

7.7 Responsible in an age of AI: If PDLPs incorporate features with generative AI, such as all-purpose chatbots, governments must ensure that these tools are rigorously and continuously tested for accuracy, safety, and age and cultural appropriateness. This should be done in collaboration with appropriate technology auditing authorities, while recognizing that no technology will ever be entirely risk-free. AI tools integrated into PDLPs should be guided by parameters that keep interactions tightly focused on education. These interactions need to reflect developmentally appropriate scaffolding and support learning without allowing students to fully offload thinking and judgement. AI tools in PDLPs should also allow human teachers and other users to review and, if necessary, override machine decisions and outputs. Exchanges with chatbots and virtual tutors should guide and facilitate education; they should not provide companionship. Children are more likely to humanize automated tools and understand them as authority figures than adults, so it is vital that AI is projected

as the machine tool it is, not as a human person or technology that can reason or pass moral judgement like a human. All platforms should use plain and accessible language to explain how educational AI tools operate and how they are reviewed and quality controlled. Transparency, responsiveness to users, and clear avenues for redress should accompany the rollout of AI functionalities in PDLPs.

Call to action

In the physical world, public schools require constant care and dedication to remain functional, relevant, and trusted. Public digital learning platforms demand commensurate care and dedication. This is not to suggest that digital learning platforms are equivalent to schools. They are not. Well-run schools remain far more important and can support the holistic well-being and educational needs of learners far better than the best digital platforms. Good digital learning platforms are simply new and necessary branches of educational infrastructure that, when correctly developed and implemented, strengthen education as a human right and a public good while extending its reach.

The seven principles elaborated in the UNESCO-UNICEF-ITU Charter explain how governments and the people they serve might wish to design and develop public digital learning platforms that respond to educational needs and improve learning, in concert with schools and other educational institutions and spaces. The principles will need to be contextualized to address the unique realities of diverse national and subnational education contexts.

Ultimately, this Charter is a call to place digital learning platforms for public education in public hands. Oversight and regulation of public digital learning platforms should be led by education authorities, teachers, and other officials who serve the public and are accountable to the public.

The time has come to support education as a human right and a public good in online as well as in offline realms. People deserve digital spaces that complement and enrich education provided in the vital physical and social spaces of schools. Public digital learning platforms are integral components of holistic education systems. Governments are encouraged to develop and improve digital learning platforms according to the principles and recommendations in this Charter.

UNESCO, UNICEF, and ITU will work collaboratively with relevant educational authorities who wish to take this step.

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Charter for Public Digital Learning Platforms

This Charter is an output of the UNESCO-UNICEF Gateways to Public Digital Learning Initiative.

The initiative, which grew out of the Transforming Education Summit in 2022, helps countries establish and improve national and subnational public digital learning platforms. It provides governments an international platform to share information about how digital learning platforms are developed, funded, maintained, governed, owned, and implemented — and what impacts they have.

This Charter reflects knowledge and understandings gained through close cooperation with countries that are members of the Gateways Initiative, including: Bangladesh, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Chile, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Finland, Ghana, Indonesia, Jordan, Kenya, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Malaysia, Malawi, Malta, Mongolia, Singapore, South Africa, the United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda, the United States of America, Uruguay, and Zambia, among others.

The Charter text was developed by UNESCO, UNICEF, and ITU with input from an advisory group of 14 international experts, and drawing on knowledge from the Gateways Initiative as well as the Giga Initiative, a UNICEF-ITU endeavour to support governments in connecting schools to the internet. The international experts came from a variety of organizations with specialization in digital learning platforms, including: Creative Commons, the EdTech Hub, Education International, Smart Africa, the United Nations Office for Digital and Emerging Technologies, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and the World Bank.

The Charter was refined based on a series of consultations with representatives from Gateways member countries. The Charter was opened for public comment and adjusted in line with input received through this process.

The Charter was finalized by UNESCO, UNICEF, and ITU and released on the occasion of the International Day of Digital Learning in 2026. The Charter will guide and support country efforts to develop and strengthen public digital learning platforms.

Stay in touch

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