

Education in a digital society

1. The digital revolution has brought about unprecedented possibilities in terms of storing and transmitting information. Digital technology's potential for education is huge, particularly in disseminating knowledge. For example, MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) enable web users all over the world to attend classes given by top-class professors.

And yet the digital world is scary. The dangers of screens for small children have been clearly established. Among other things, behavioural and concentration disorders in children and teenagers illustrate the excesses of an impersonal digital society where people are riveted to their phones, compulsively viewing all kinds of unnecessary messages. Recent research has also shown that students retain more of what they learn when they take notes by hand rather than on a laptop.

Our session invites us to reflect on how we can make the most of digital technologies without yielding to such excesses. What balance can be established with the use of digital technology in education?

2. It also leads us to think about how we can train future generations to succeed in today's world, where there is a distinct sense that technological progress is speeding up while, paradoxically, productivity gains in developed countries seem to be slowing down. What are the key skills education should be transmitting today?

3. Lastly, the central issue of education in our societies above all involves equal access to high-quality teaching, so that it can truly promote social mobility and good integration into society.

Before impacting educational practices, the digitisation of society has first of all disrupted the labour market and created inequalities. These inequalities are being reproduced and even intensified from one generation to the next by an educational system that enhances and legitimises the advantage of the wealthiest.

In the PISA reading and mathematics tests, France has average results as an OECD country. But it is one of the nations with the widest gaps between the performances of students from privileged and disadvantaged backgrounds. Schools have ceased to function as vehicles of integration and intergenerational mobility. Furthermore, lifelong learning is not improving the situation. The PIAAC (Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies) survey on skills, this time those of adults, also reveals a very unequal France with extreme skill gaps between the top and the bottom of the distribution .

What is the situation in Korea, the UK and the world in general? Can digital technology help transmit the keys for successful integration into society to a wide range of people, and make education a great vehicle for social mobility again? This is the burning issue of the decades to come.