

PANEL
**Democratising Learning:
Re-imagined Through A New "Blend"
in 3D and VR.**

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Panellist

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1 Abstract

Covid-19 brought with it a need for a quantum shift in how educators, industry and technologists need to adapt and create new, more inclusive and innovative modes and approaches to how we learn, whether at school, college or at work. The role and responsibility of technology accelerated from "enabling" to "defining" due to Covid-19. Blended Learning for over 50% of students could continue the "norm", not just during the Pandemic [1]. Blended Learning enabled by technologies has reduced the disruption to the delivery of Education. The Covid-19 Pandemic impact has accelerated online-only forms of Blended Learning over previous "blends" of the face-to-face ad online [2].

The increase in technology and learning intervention and facilitated over virtual learning systems [2] have had its challenges. Challenges such as access to technology, fast internet access, and marginalised learners have additional and unique learning requirements. A case example being Autistic learners.

The opportunity has never been more present to utilise Virtual reality (VR) better and 3D learning environments to deliver a better "blend" of learning

approaches and activate such platforms through existing, proven digital literacy platforms in Europe[3]. To envision and enact a more Inclusive, Resilient and Democratic framework for Blended Learning. A key element of the discussion will be developing a Blending Learning "Digital Wellness" framework piloted in Educational environments in the coming months. A framework that has been developed by the Digital Skills Awards team and supported by the European Commission. This will form part of the new EdTech response to the educational challenges of 2020/2021.

2 Aim and target audience.

The panel discussion aims to bring together transdisciplinary practitioners and experts to deliver critical insights, analysis and futures states of learning and skills development made possible due to VR and 3D environments. Additionally, to demonstrate how through technology industry partnership, learning in VR and 3D can be genuinely democratic and support "Digital Wellness". The panel profile brings different dimensions and knowledge, making the attendance highly compelling for Academic Researchers and Blended learning practitioners, Industry professionals, Educationalist, EdTech practitioners, and Ambassadors for Social and Responsible Research and the emerging area of study being Digital Wellness.

For educationalists looking to be inspired to discover the affordances of next-generation 3D learning environments, a live multi-location/user demonstration will occur at the end of the Panel discussion. Attendees will see at first hand a recently developed 3D Cloud-based learning platform that supports a new "Blend" of Learning that transcends a number of the educational challenges witnessed in 2020 due to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

3 Timeliness and relevance.

The imperative of ensuring that everyone has access to Education across technological, pedagogical and policy-based democratic platforms that empowers their present and future potential is essential for three main reasons

Firstly the future of workplace skills is of significant economic and cultural importance to the European Commission [4]. This focus has increased with the impact the of Covid-19 Pandemic. There is a considerable shortage in higher cognitive, technical and creative skilled roles in the future in the magnitude of 3 million workers [5],[6].

Secondly, Education needs to more accessible than ever before. An Inclusive approach to the design of learning pedagogies, platforms and strategies is key to making this happen. This is of particular criticality given the disruption to approximately 1.6 billion learners worldwide due to the Covid-19 Pandemic[7].

Thirdly learners of additional and unique need offer represent tremendous untapped future skills and knowledge base. "Digital Wellness" empowered

through EdTech and Educational Digital Transformation is a key element for the recovery and ongoing resilience in Education post-2020/2021.

4 Panellist contributions.

The transdisciplinary panel selected represent TechEd, Education Pedagogy, Industry, Leaders in Responsible Research and Innovation Educational and Immersive Learning Spaces for Education, Autism and Workplace learning. Collectively they represent a transformative and disruption group of disruptive educational innovators.

5 References.

- [1] OECD (2020). A helping hand: Education responding to the coronavirus pandemic.
- [2] European Commission "Blended Learning in Schools Education, guidelines for the start of The academic year 2020/21" June 2020, Published by the European Commission
- [3] Reference made to [Digital Schools Awards European Pilot Programme | Build Digital Schools & Education in Europe \(awards4selfie.eu\)](#)
- [4] Transitions on the Horizon: Perspectives for the European Unions future research and innovative policies. Final Report from project BOHEMIA. Beyond the horizon: Foresight in support of the EU's future research and innovation policy. European Commission of 2018.
- [5] World Economic Forum, Future of Work Report, 2020.
- [6] Accenture, Future of Work Report, 2020.
- [7] United Nations. "Policy Brief: Education during COVID- 19 and beyond", 2020.
- [8] The National Autistic Society UK, "New Shocking Data highlights Autism employment gap" Report. Published February 2021. [New shocking data highlights the autism employment gap](#)