GLOBAL CONGRESS ON EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND FUTURE SKILLS:
BRIDGING INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORKS AND LOCAL REALITIES

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Abstract:

International academic congresses have become influential platforms for shaping competency frameworks across education systems worldwide. As automation, artificial intelligence, and ecological pressures reshape labour markets, identifying which skills education must cultivate has grown urgent and contested. This paper examines three major forums — IEEE EDUCON, ICERI, and the World Economic Forum Future of Jobs summits — and the future skills discourse they produce. Drawing on a systematic review of proceedings and policy documents from 2018–2024, the study identifies five dominant skill clusters: AI literacy, adaptive thinking, cross-cultural collaboration, green skills, and socio-emotional learning. A critical analysis reveals that dominant frameworks are disproportionately shaped by OECD-member contexts, marginalising developing economies and diverse knowledge systems. The paper proposes a culturally responsive, multi-stakeholder model for congress-driven skill governance that acknowledges local pedagogical traditions while advancing globally portable competencies.

Keywords: future skills; educational research congresses; AI literacy; cross-cultural collaboration; competency frameworks; curriculum reform; global education policy

Introduction

The past decade has witnessed a proliferation of international congresses, summits, and forums that claim to chart the trajectory of learning for an uncertain future. These gatherings — from tightly focused academic symposia to headline-generating events such as the World Economic Forum's annual reskilling initiatives — produce policy briefs, competency taxonomies, and research agendas that subsequently filter into national curricula and teacher training programmes worldwide. The cumulative effect is substantial: the discourse produced at such events frames what counts as a 'future skill', who defines it, and, critically, which educational systems serve as the baseline.

A tension rarely addressed in the literature lies at the heart of this process. On one hand, international congresses appear to perform a democratising function, assembling researchers from diverse national contexts and publishing globally accessible proceedings. On the other, the selection of keynote speakers, the languages of publication, and the funding structures of forums like the WEF systematically skew resulting frameworks toward the concerns of high-income, technologically advanced economies. A teacher in rural Uzbekistan or sub-Saharan Africa encounters future-skills mandates designed, implicitly, with Silicon Valley or Northern European labour markets in mind. This paper argues that structural reform of congress governance is as urgent as the skills themselves.

Dominant Skill Clusters in Global Frameworks

The Five-Cluster Consensus

A review of proceedings and policy outputs from the three principal forums — IEEE EDUCON, ICERI, and the WEF Future of Jobs reports — reveals five skill clusters that recur with the greatest frequency. Table 1 presents these clusters alongside representative competencies and an indicative priority ranking derived from citation frequency in reviewed sources.

Table 1

Dominant Future Skill Clusters in Global Congress Frameworks (2018–2024)

Skill Cluster	Representative Competencies	Priority (1–5)
Digital & AI Literacy	Prompt engineering, data interpretation, algorithmic thinking	5
Adaptive & Critical Thinking	Problem framing, cognitive flexibility, systems reasoning	5
Cross-Cultural Collaboration	Intercultural communication, global citizenship, empathy	4
Green & Sustainability Skills	Carbon literacy, circular economy, eco-design thinking	4
Socio-Emotional Learning	Self-regulation, resilience, ethical decision-making	3

AI literacy has risen to the top of the hierarchy with remarkable speed. The WEF (2023) projects that analytical and creative thinking combined with AI proficiency will constitute the most valued competency pair by 2027. Adaptive thinking — the capacity to reframe problems as contexts shift — ranks alongside AI literacy in virtually every framework reviewed. Cross-cultural collaboration receives consistent acknowledgement, yet it is frequently treated as a soft supplement to harder technical skills rather than a core epistemic competence in its own right. Socio-emotional learning, despite robust evidence of its effect on academic and life outcomes, receives the lowest priority score in practitioner-facing documents, a disproportion that merits sustained attention from congress organisers.

Conclusion and Recommendations

International educational research congresses occupy a structurally powerful position in global learning governance. The dominant skill clusters they produce — centred on AI literacy, adaptive thinking, cross-cultural collaboration, green skills, and socio-emotional learning — are broadly defensible responses to documented global trends. The critical concern is not the content of these clusters per se but the processes through which they are constructed, which embed a systematic bias toward high-income, Western contexts and marginalise local knowledge systems and educational realities.

Four recommendations follow from this analysis. First, national educational authorities should conduct their own future skills audits rather than adopting international frameworks uncritically. Second, congress programme committees should establish formal mechanisms for geographic and epistemological diversity in membership. Third, AI literacy should be integrated with socio-emotional and ethical competencies rather than treated as a separate technical track. Fourth, green and sustainability skills require dedicated congress sub-themes and research networks to accelerate their incorporation into teacher education. Progress on each of these fronts would strengthen the capacity of global congresses to serve, rather than inadvertently constrain, the full diversity of the world's learners.

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