
19-21 November 2013
Bangkok, Thailand

Concept Note

Introduction

The world has witnessed tremendous educational achievements during the last decade. While universal basic education is yet to be a reality for many countries, great strides have been made towards this goal under the Education for All campaign, which is expected to end in 2015. At the same time, the demand for knowledge-based society and capacity for innovation has propelled a rapid expansion of the higher education sector. Accompanied by the exponential growth of information and communication technologies (ICT), opportunities for development have never been better.

Yet, the quality of education has often been singled out as a major concern, with huge gaps in learning outcomes between developed and developing countries, and between the rich and the poor within the countries. Amidst global economic slowdown, increasing numbers of graduates are finding out that their education did not prepare them adequately for the job market and the world of work, adding to the woes of rising unemployed youth numbering 73.4 million in 2013. Similarly, as technologies become an integral part of modern life, new issues emerge ranging from the different levels of computer literacy to the proper use of technology and social media.

Clearly, there is a great need for innovative solutions.

UNESCO as the specialized UN agency in education supports Member States in strengthening the responsiveness of their education systems to current and future demands, and to sustain and accelerate their education progress. UNESCO is actively engaged in a series of global dialogues on post-2015 agenda to build on the achievements of EFA and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Effective measures to ensure quality education, adequate financing, sufficient numbers of trained and motivated teachers, appropriate infrastructure, tools and technologies are critical areas for consideration.

UNESCO’s work is guided by several strategic objectives, one of which is to develop and strengthen education systems that will provide learning opportunities throughout life. The sub-sectors under this strategic objective include higher education, professional development of teachers and ICT in education. The UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education houses the Asia-Pacific Programme of Educational Innovation for Development (APEID), mandating these three particular programme areas.

Asia-Pacific Programme of Educational Innovation for Development (APEID)

APEID was established in 1973 to improve the quality of education and promote sustainable human development through educational innovation and research. Over the years, APEID has undergone many changes affecting its structure, programmes and activities in response to the developing needs and demands of Member States and partners in the region. Currently, APEID focuses on higher education, teacher education and ICT in education.
The Asia and Pacific region has more than 800 million people living in extreme poverty, accounting for nearly two-thirds of the world’s poor. The diversity in the region in terms of culture, economy, demography, natural environment and political system presents many challenges but APEID also sees many opportunities for innovative solutions in its three programme areas.

- **Higher Education**

  In 2009, UNESCO successfully convened the second World Conference on Higher Education (WCHE) in Paris, which documented the new dynamics of higher education with proposals for follow-up actions by Member States. It is widely believed that substantial expansion of higher education systems, rapid growth of students’ mobility across borders, and the increasing use of ICT in higher education can be the fundamental drivers for a new higher education agenda for the years to come. This is especially true for most countries in the Asia and Pacific region. However, there are development gaps among higher education systems in this region: some countries are still in the early stages of development, while others have more advanced systems and different higher education agenda. As the UNESCO regional coordinator for higher education, APEID needs to address the various issues and concerns facing all countries in the region through north-south, south-south, and triangular cooperation, including the development of regional normative instruments, capacity building programmes, thematic analytical studies, networking and information sharing platforms.

  For the next programme cycle (2014-2017), APEID is going to focus on the following three areas in higher education: 1) governance of higher education systems and institutions, with special attention on the capacity building programmes for emerging higher education systems; 2) internationalization of higher education, with particular reference to the Asia and Pacific Regional Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications to be used as an important tool to facilitate students’ mobility and internationalization of higher education in this region; and 3) open and distance learning (ODL) and open education resources (OER).

- **Teacher Education**

  The quality of education is highly dependent on the quality of teachers in terms of their knowledge, skills, values and commitment. Within the ambit of UNESCO’s efforts to achieve the Education for All and the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development goals, a key thrust of APEID’s work on teachers in the past decade has been to reorient educational programmes to promote the social, environmental, cultural and economic knowledge, skills and perspectives pertinent to inclusive education and sustainability. The development of trainers’ guides and teachers’ manuals on ESD has contributed much to enhance the capacities of teacher educators and teachers. The emphasis on student-centred learning has led to a rethinking of the roles of teachers, raising great interest in innovative pedagogies and collaborative learning environments. To optimize resources, APEID also works closely with teacher education institutions and other national agencies to strengthen pre-service teacher education which is complemented by relevant in-service teacher training programmes. Underlining the need to recruit and retain quality teachers, efforts are also made to review and monitor the status and working conditions of teachers as outlined in the 1966 ILO/UNESCO Recommendations concerning the Status of Teachers.

  Responding to the needs of Member States in increasing the quality of teachers, APEID will continue to work in the following broad areas for the next programme cycle: 1) teacher standards; 2) professional development and innovative pedagogies; 3) school leadership and 4) status and working conditions of teachers.

- **ICT in Education**

  The ICT in Education programme was established under APEID in 2003, in response to the growing demands on policy and technical guidance for the effective integration of ICT in the education system. The ICT in Education programme envisions cultivating a new culture of
learning created and mainstreamed through ICT-enabled innovation. Aligned with UNESCO’s priorities, the main area of ICT in Education is to strengthen the capacity of teachers in harnessing the potential of ICT to enhance quality education. It ranges from supporting teacher education institutions to develop and update ICT-integrated curriculum for pre-service training, providing teacher educators with trainings on how to design and implement student-centred learning activities with ICT, developing and distributing e-resources for teaching and learning, and facilitating international collaboration and cross-fertilizing on innovative use of ICT, to name a few. Another main area of ICT in Education is policy advice. For the last decade, it undertook various research and policy reviews to inform policy development, provided ICT in Education policy development workshops for 27 countries across the region and organized regional policy forums to facilitate high-level policy dialogues.

Built upon the past experiences and expertise, ICT in Education is actively seeking partners who wish to join hands with APEID to expand its programme areas. The prospective areas of focus include 1) promoting open educational resources beyond higher education, 2) advocating the responsible and safe use of ICT and 3) developing indicators to evaluate the impacts of ICT at the school level to better inform policy development.

In addition, APEID’s flagship event, the UNESCO-International Conference held since 1995, provides a forum for policy dialogues and information/knowledge sharing on education innovations and exemplary practices. Themes of recent conferences include: Reinventing Higher Education: Toward Participatory and Sustainable Development; Quality Innovations for Teaching and Learning; ICT Transforming Education; Education for Human Resource Development; Inspiring Education: Creativity and Entrepreneurship; and The Heart of Education: Learning to Live Together.

For APEID to remain relevant and responsive to the needs of its Member States, APEID is organizing a consultative meeting to discuss strategies and partnerships for enhancing educational innovations in its three programme areas on 19-21 November 2013 in Bangkok, Thailand. Experts, practitioners and key partners will be invited to the meeting to contribute to the development of a framework of action in line with UNESCO’s Quadrennial Programme Priorities (2014-2017) and UNESCO’s Education Strategy (2014-2021), and explore areas for collaboration to optimize the rich knowledge and experiences available in the region.

Objectives of the Meeting
More specifically, the objectives of the meeting are to:
- Identify major issues in Higher Education, Teacher Education and ICT in Education, and outline innovative strategies and action plans to address them
- Explore potential areas for collaboration and support
- Discuss partnerships arrangements and funding opportunities
- Review APEID networks and investigate options for strengthening regional and inter-country cooperation, collaboration and partnerships

Expected Outputs
The consultative meeting will be instrumental in increasing participants’ knowledge and understanding of major issues facing Higher Education, ICT in Education and Teacher Education in the region. This will help to sharpen the focus of the three programme areas, and facilitate the development of effective strategies and action plans for UNESCO as well as its partners. Areas and modalities for collaboration and partnerships will be identified for further discussion and development after the meeting. Networking opportunities will be enhanced with recommendations to optimize new technologies and media. The roles and expectations of UNESCO, APEID networks and partners will be clearer and thus enable APEID to improve coordination and communication in order to design and promote educational innovations and practices. More specifically, the expected outputs are:
• A report highlighting key points of the meeting
• Framework for UNESCO’s Higher Education, Teacher Education and ICT in Education programmes based on international and regional agenda as well as priorities of Member States
• APEID Programme for 2014-2017
• Proposals for collaboration between UNESCO and partners in the three programme areas

Participants
The meeting will involve about 50 key stakeholders of APEID’s programme areas, including policy makers; academia; researchers; school leaders; educators; staff of international organizations, NGOs, private sector; and UNESCO staff from the region. Participants will be asked to do some preparatory work prior to the meeting. More information will be provided upon confirmation of participation.

All local costs (accommodation and meals) will be covered by UNESCO Bangkok, while support for travel costs may be available for some participants on a case-by-case basis.

Venue
The Imperial Queens Park Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand

Dates
19-21 November 2013

Tentative Programme

Day 1 (full day)
• Opening of meeting
• Presentations of APEID’s Higher Education, ICT in Education and Teacher Education programmes
• Presentations of Member States’ priorities
• Welcome dinner

Day 2 (full day)
• Presentations of partners’ work focussing on areas of synergies with APEID’s programme areas
• Small group sessions to consolidate areas for collaboration and partnerships

Day 3 (half day)
• Reporting back on small group discussions
• Review of networks and partnership arrangements
• Follow-up actions and wrap-up

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