CONCEPT NOTE

Background and Rationale

Learning is increasingly recognized as one of the core themes for future education as well as in the global discussions on the role of education in post-2015 agendas. The Asia and Pacific regional high-level expert meeting on Towards EFA 2015 and Beyond: Shaping a New Vision for Education, held in Bangkok in May 2012, also highlighted the fact that learning should be one of the areas of emphasis in shaping future education goals and strategies.

Current and future efforts to reshape education can benefit from a growing wealth of knowledge and scientific evidence, including the following examples of findings:

- People possess different kinds of minds and therefore learn, remember, perform, and understand in different ways (Gardener, 1991; 1993);
- ICTs have created new ways of accessing information, which in turn has produced a new generation of learners who ‘think and process information fundamentally differently’ (Prensky, 2001);
- The very nature and the spaces within which learning occurs are changing (CISCO, 2010) and there is need to move beyond the classroom-centred paradigm of learning toward and open learning approach;
- Non-cognitive skills are important determinants for academic and employment outcomes (Heckman et al., 2006);
- Economic returns are determined by the fact that learning has taken place, expressed in cognitive skills (Hanushek and Woessman, 2008);
- A growing recognition of the importance of key competencies for a successful life and a well-functioning society, as documented in a rich body of studies (Rychen and Salganik (eds.), 2001, 2003; OECD 2005; European Commission, 2006) as well as of 21st century skills (e.g. P21, 2009; ATC21S, 2010);
- Learning has a direct impact on growth and development (World Bank, 2011);
- More attention should be paid to measuring social outcomes (OECD, 2010; University of London Institute for Education, 2008; Stigliz, Sen and Fitoussi, 2009).

As illustrated in the above examples, education systems need to evolve in order to equip learners with a set of skills that can enable them to be innovative and adaptive in an increasingly connected and constantly changing world. The concept of lifelong learning provides a key organizing principle for education and training systems (UNESCO, 1996). This requires the creation of a system which provides a continuum of learning opportunities (formal, non-formal and informal) for people of all ages (infants, children, adolescents and adults), made available by a wide coalition of learning providers.
Aim of the Meeting

This high-level meeting follows the abovementioned one on shaping future orientations for education and will focus on learning. As we embark on discussions on learning, it must be recognized that there are varied perspectives on learning, from different disciplines. This high-level expert meeting will therefore bring together renowned educationists, learning scientists, and economists to engage in a multi-disciplinary dialogue on learning.

A second key consideration is that while there is an abundance of research and knowledge on learning, this knowledge is not necessarily applied by policy makers. In this view, this meeting will develop recommendations on what may be required to build effective learning systems in a changing world. This approach involves looking beyond the confines of the traditional education and training sector from a life-long learning perspective.

The findings of the meeting will also support furthering regional and international work towards developing a new vision of education and the post-2015 development agenda.

Specific Objectives

- Enrich the current global debate on learning by promoting dialogue among educationists, learning scientists and economists;
- Formulate recommendations on further research; actions towards building effective learning systems; post-2015 agendas.

Participants

High-level experts in the areas of economics, neuroscience, learning sciences and education, including researchers from universities and research institutes, international organizations and the private sector.

Dates and Venue

26 – 28 November 2012, Imperial Queens Park Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand.