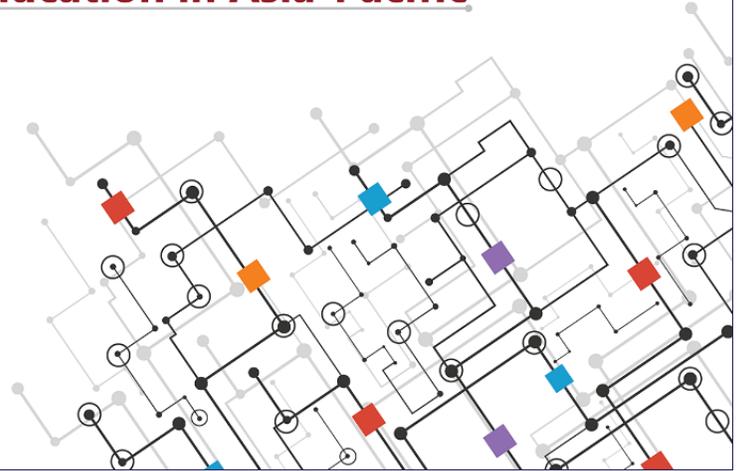
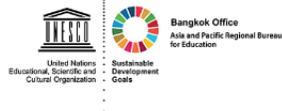


# Conference on Digital Citizenship Education in Asia-Pacific

Dusit Thani Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand  
2-3 March 2017



in collaboration with:



## Background

The proliferation of information and communications technology (ICT) has made them an indispensable part of our daily lives and have fundamentally changed the way in which our societies operate. The exponential growth of ICT in the past decades has significantly reduced the cost of its provision and consumption, consequently offering affordable access to technology for everyone, enabling easy access to information, people, services and goods. As of 2015, there were almost 7 billion mobile telephone subscriptions globally, with around 4.5 billion unique subscribers (61% of the global population), while about 3.2 billion people (43% of the world's population) had internet access via mobile and/or fixed broadband subscriptions (International Telecommunication Union, 2015).

The international development community has acknowledged the “catalytic potential of ICTs to advance development agendas and priorities”, as laid out in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the recently adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Accordingly, the Education 2030 Agenda highlights ICT as a means “to strengthen education systems, knowledge dissemination, information access, quality and effective learning, and more effective service provision”. Furthermore, the Education 2030 Framework for Action emphasizes ICT skills as a necessary skill set that citizens should acquire to confidently thrive in this globalised, knowledge-based and technology-driven world (UNESCO, 2015).

## Asia-Pacific

The Asia-Pacific (AP) region occupies approximately 22% of the global land area with disparate landscapes and climates. The region accounts a population of over 4.2 billion in 2015, nearly 60% of the world's total population, of which more than 40% or over 1.8 billion are children and youth aged 0 to 24 years old (UNESCAP, 2015). Correspondingly, it entails a wide diversity of societies with varied cultures, value and belief systems, religions, languages, and economies.

Such diversity goes on for the levels of ICT development in the region. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) has ranked the Asia-Pacific as the most diverse region in the world in terms of ICT development (ITU, 2015b), with IDI ranging from 1.83 to 8.93, with 10 as the highest possible rating (International Telecommunication Union, 2015). Nevertheless, the use of ICT continues to expand tremendously among children and youth, through facilities in their homes, schools, and communities. In fact, ITU has observed that worldwide, young people are the most active users of ICT – with youth nearly two times more networked than the other age groups – providing them access to information and venues

for participation (UN Office of the Secretary General's Envoy on Youth, n.d.). In Asia-Pacific, it is estimated that 58% of youth (385M) aged 15-24 years old account for 30% of the total internet users in the region. Based on the sustained increase in Internet use among youth, this figure is expected to more than double in the next five years. They are considered as key drivers to ICT uptake, use, and impact in their respective countries.

### Necessity for a Solid Knowledge Base to Develop Digital Citizenship Education

ICT has indeed changed the way we learn, travel, work, interact, and participate. Without a doubt, the opportunities and benefits that ICT has brought to our lives are enormous. ICT has made it much easier for people to obtain information, process complex data, learn/enhance skills, share viewpoints and self-expressions, network with others, and collaborate on creative pursuits. It has significantly reduced previous difficulties associated with accessing relevant knowledge bases, connecting with experts, participating in civic engagements, pursuing personal interests, and expanding one's horizon. Furthermore, ICT has enabled special sectors in society to access basic services and participate productively in the knowledge economy, such as assistive technologies for persons with disabilities (PWDs), distance and/or lifelong learning prospects for remote villages, e-health services for underserved areas, social media for e-government feedback mechanisms, e-commerce options for livelihoods among local communities, ICT for disaster and risk reduction and management for at-risk communities, and many more.

However, although digital technologies have brought about significant opportunities and benefits, they have also raised an array of social and ethical issues, ranging from online scams and data theft to cyberbullying, online sex trafficking and radicalization. The internet has likewise provided a wide-reaching and cost-efficient vehicle for violent content, hate speech, and misleading propaganda.

Considering that ICT has become a dominant channel to participate in and contribute to the highly connected knowledge society, it is of paramount importance for the education sector, with ample support from other sectors, to provide an enabling and conducive environment that fosters digital citizenship among children and youth. In its recent study, UNESCO (2016) articulates a broader definition of digital citizenship as "being able to find, access, use and create information effectively; engage with other users and with content in an active, critical, sensitive and ethical manner; and navigate the online and ICT environment safely and responsibly, being aware of one's own rights." Thus, digital citizenship encompasses both the capacity to leverage the opportunities afforded by the internet for positive growth in areas such as education, skill-building, civic engagement, etc. as well as the capacity to neutralize threats and respect others.

There is an expressed need among Member States, developed and developing nations alike, to help children and youths develop such digital resilience and competencies. Less known is that educational programmes and policies to foster such competencies should be built upon a solid knowledge base and evidence-based understanding on children's actual behaviour, experiences, issues and perceptions in the digital spaces and what types of interventions are most effective at building these competencies. While previous research efforts had been mostly concentrated in the context of industrialized Western nations, i.e. in Europe and North America (Gasser et al., 2010), research studies were conducted more recently by various organizations and countries (e.g. Global Kids Online, WeProtect Global Alliance, ThinkYoung and Google's Digital Resilience study, UNICEF Digital Landscape studies, etc.) to expand the knowledge base in the Asia Pacific region. However, a cross-national comparative contextualized research study within the region is still lacking. As such, there is a need to create a comparative research framework as well as

concrete research tools specifically to guide education sector policies and programmes.

It is in this light that the UNESCO Asia Pacific Regional Bureau on Education and Google Asia Pacific are co-organizing the **“Conference on Digital Citizenship Education in Asia-Pacific”** on 2-3 March 2017 in Bangkok, Thailand. Key organizations will be invited to present their research findings and propose feasible action points to a multi-stakeholder audience that includes representatives from Member States, field experts, researchers, private organizations, and other relevant stakeholders. It is envisioned that an agreement will be reached on a core set digital citizenship competencies that needs to be developed among children, youth, and teachers, mapped out from various research frameworks and studies, which will feed into the design of a research tool to measure these competencies.

The Meeting will likewise provide an opportunity for the organizers to consult the participants on developing the framework and methodology for a new UNESCO research, namely the “Digital Kids Asia-Pacific (DKAP; working title)”. This regional comparative study aims to establish a clear baseline understanding of the actual perception, competency levels, and use of ICT among Asia-Pacific children and youth, and will provide as an output a concrete research toolkit that will be freely available for anyone to use. This toolkit aims to build the capacity of researchers in comparatively assessing children and youth’s attitude and behaviours, experiences, levels of engagement, and challenges in the use of ICT within an educational context, while addressing contextual factors across the Asia-Pacific region. More specifically, building upon the recent work by Global Kids Online, an international proponent consortium in the area of children’s online behaviour ([www.globalkidsonline.net](http://www.globalkidsonline.net)), the Meeting aims to adapt its research toolkit and framework into Asia-Pacific, adding new modules on teachers and enhancing existing modules that address issues related to educational settings (i.e. modules on Skills and School). It is hoped that the research tools and consequent findings will help education stakeholders in developing data-informed context-appropriate policy responses, educational campaigns, curriculum, training programmes, and resources. Interested Member States and research institutes will be invited to join the research during and after the Meeting.

Lastly, the organizers seek to establish a regional network to build upon the deliberations and agreements reached during the Meeting. Participants will be enjoined to share their ideas on the network’s roles, potential activities, and outputs, including perhaps a clearinghouse of relevant knowledge and good practices that will contribute to expanding Digital Citizenship Education within the region, among others.

### **Meeting Objectives**

The conference aims:

1. To raise policy awareness on the importance of promoting an approach to digital citizenship that encompasses both empowering young people to leverage the opportunities afforded by the internet while also navigating it safely and respectfully.
2. To deliberate on the DKAP research framework for measuring children’s ICT competency levels, behaviours, perception, and challenges, with emphasis given to teachers’ digital capacity and students’ use of ICT for learning in education settings
3. To develop a work plan for the DKAP study
4. To engage participants in a regional collaborative network

## Expected Outputs

By the end of the Meeting, the meeting organizers will have the following outputs:

- Outcome statement of the core set of digital citizenship competencies among children
- Draft research framework, methodology, and work plan for the DKAP study
- Tentative list of countries and institutions who will participate in the pilot run of the DKAP study
- Establishment of an Asia-Pacific Digital Citizenship Network to share relevant knowledge and good practices

## Dates and Venue

The meeting will be organized at the Dusit Thani Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand on 2-3 March 2017.

## Participants

Representatives from selected Asia-Pacific Member States various experts, researchers, and other relevant stakeholders representing public, private, and social sectors from the following countries: *Australia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Indonesia, India, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, and Taiwan.*

- *Gov't Officials*
- *Experts*
- *Private sector representatives*
- *IGOs and NGOs*
- *Representatives from children and youth, teachers*

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