Information and communication technology (ICT) plays a critical role in enabling inclusive and sustainable human development. It provides people not only with “access” to information and services, but also with opportunities to participate in and contribute to the knowledge economy (“voice” and “networking”). Without a doubt, the opportunities and benefits that ICT has brought to our lives are enormous.

However, the very same technologies have raised an array of social and ethical issues to contend with. Globally, these issues have ranged from online safety and security (identity theft, scams, system phishing, hacking, online predators and cyber bullying) to misuse of information (plagiarism, access to inappropriate contents, and misrepresentation) to physical and mental health concerns (long exposure to the screens, back and arm pains, and game/Internet addiction).

The opportunities and simultaneous risks that ICT presents need a balanced approach and appropriate attention from the education sector. A safe digital environment should be created where young digital citizens can comfortably and confidently take advantage of technologies in an ethical and responsible manner in order to allow them to successfully participate in and contribute to the knowledge society. Creating such an environment requires a concerted effort from all related stakeholders. Among them, teachers are at the very forefront of these strides with the power to equip students with the right set of skills to act smartly and responsibly in a digital world. Likewise, the roles of Teacher Education Institutes (TEIs) are emphasized in including the notion of safe, effective and responsible use of ICT (SERU-ICT) in teacher training curriculum and in training teachers to be active agents to foster digital citizenship.

Since the knowledge base about the experiences and practices of SERU-ICT among the Asia-Pacific countries are intermittent\(^1\) \(^2\), it is high time for the UNESCO Resource Distribution and Training Centres

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(RDTC) to promote dialogue, discussion and research in this area. In recognition of the importance of this issue, this year’s Regional Seminar for UNESCO RDTC aims to provide the Member TEIs an avenue to actively exchange knowledge, perspectives, and experiences on SERU-ICT. The Seminar also intends to help the RDTC members strengthen their capacity in SERU-ICT so as to adapt it into their teacher training programmes as well as other scholarly works. The Regional Seminar will be co-organized by UNESCO and South China Normal University on 11 – 13 November 2015 in Guangzhou, People’s Republic of China.

With the main theme “Teacher Training to Promote Safe, Effective and Responsible Use of ICT (SERU-ICT)” the Seminar will also address three sub-themes, including, 1) Teacher Training for Media and Information Literacy (MIL), 2) Open Educational Resources (OERs) to Enhance Teaching and Learning, and 3) Teachers’ Professional Learning Community to Foster Collaborative Teaching and Peer Coaching.

In order to promote SERU-ICT, MIL can be vital as it refers to a set of skills, knowledge and attitude, which are essential for life-long learning, responsible citizenship and good governance, as defined by UNESCO. MIL equips people with the ability to critically evaluate media and information, learn how to learn in the perspective of life-long learning, effectively and ethically use media and produce information, understand the role and functions of media in democratic societies, understand the condition under which media can fulfil their functions, and engage with media for self-expression and participation. These are all very important features of SERU-ICT.

The relationship between SERU-ICT and OERs is twofold. On the one hand, SERU-ICT can equip teachers with the right set of skills to search for high quality OER pools, critically evaluate them and ethically use them. On the other hand, they can also create OERs and appropriately share them. In this way, teachers can contribute relevant and useful contents in OERs to promoting SERU-ICT.

The premise of a ‘professional learning community’ underscores that educational work is collaborative, and collaboration is an important aspect of professional practices in educational settings. In a developed context such as UK, research revealed that collaborative practice among teachers is a common feature of schools where students score high in national tests, despite their disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. Given the value of collaboration, for the past years, UNESCO Bangkok has undertaken quite a few projects where the RDTC Members have been closely involved in building a community of practices for teachers and teacher educators.

It is hoped that through this year’s Regional Seminar, the RDTC Members can reiterate the significance of building such a community and foster further implementation of a professional learning community among the Members to sustain their joint efforts in promoting SERU-ICT. The professional learning community will provide a space for the Members to exchange promising practices, provide peer-coaching and support and share educational contents (or OERs) on the SERU-ICT. It is also strongly encouraged that Members create professional learning communities within their institutes and local contexts for their teachers or teacher trainees to enhance their teaching in SERU-ICT. Another important aspect is capturing data from the interaction process and pattern of professional learning community

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especially that happened through online, which can be used as exemplar contents for SERU-ICT teacher education curriculum. Also conceptualizing dynamics concerning the effective interaction process and pattern of professional learning community provides further opportunity for strengthening this mode of professional development practices in the area of SERU-ICT.

A unique feature of this year’s Seminar will be a ‘Call for Papers’ from the RDTC members (please see Annex A for details). Through the ‘Call for Papers’, RDTC Members are invited to submit abstracts on SERU-ICT, with special emphasis on ideas and relevant cases of classroom research, collaborative professional learning, and institutional strategies and ways to implement them in the training of pre-service teachers. Moreover, promising international and regional cases will be presented by invited experts to share the actual practices, concrete tactics and tools, and impacts of diverse practices on teaching and learning. This will be followed by a half-day training workshop to further aid in building the capacity of RDTCs. Furthermore, RDTC members will have the opportunity to present various accomplishments made since last year’s Regional Seminar, including research outcomes, and the proceedings of the national conferences supported by UNESCO Bangkok. Finally, a session will be organized to jointly plan future activities for 2016.

Objectives
The objectives of the Seminar are to:
1. provide the Member TEIs with an avenue to actively exchange knowledge, perspectives and experiences on SERU-ICT.
2. help the RDTC Members strengthen their capacity in SERU-ICT so as to adapt it into their teacher training programmes as well as other scholarly works.
3. update each other on the RDTC activities of the past year, such as the results from UNESCO-supported research projects and national conferences, and discuss future plans to continue the activities of RDTC network beyond 2015.

Main Theme
Teacher Training to Promote Safe, Effective and Responsible Use of ICT (SERU-ICT)

Sub-themes
1. Teacher Training for Media and Information Literacy (MIL)
2. Open Educational Resources (OERs) to Enhance Teaching and Learning
3. Teachers’ Professional Learning Community to Foster Collaborative Teaching and Peer Coaching

Participants
- Two representatives (1 fully sponsored/1 partly sponsored) from each of 24 UNESCO RDTCs from 12 countries
- Resource persons and experts
- Lecturers/students from South China Normal University
- Representatives of the partner organizations from private sector
- UNESCO staff

Venue and Date
South China Normal University in Guangzhou, People’s Republic of China on 11 – 13 November 2015.
UNESCO Contact
- Ms. Jonghwi Park, Programme Specialist, APEID/ICT in Education – UNESCO Bangkok, j.park@unesco.org
- Mr. Miron Kumar Bhowmik, Programme Officer, APEID/ICT in Education – UNESCO Bangkok, mk.bhowmik@unesco.org
- Ms. Misako Ito (for MIL-related inquiry), Regional Adviser, Communication and Information – UNESCO Bangkok, m.ito@unesco.org

South China Normal University Contact
- Mr. Jianhua Zhao, Professor and Dean, SCNU, jianhuazhao@m.scnu.edu.cn
Annex A

Call for Papers

Members from UNESCO RDTCs are invited to share their own research and cases during the Regional Seminar on Safe, Effective and Responsible Use of Information and Communication Technology (SERU-ICT) experiences, including but not limited to:

1. Current policy and practices to promote SERU-ICT: Country level case study
2. Current status of SERU-ICT in teacher education curriculum at institutional and country level
3. Innovative pedagogies in delivering SERU-ICT curriculum
4. Good practices in promoting Media and Information Literacy (MIL) in teacher-training curriculum, at institutional and country level, and good pedagogical approaches in teaching MIL
5. The potential and impact of Open Educational Resources (OERs) to enhance teaching and learning
6. The effect of teachers’ professional learning community to foster collaborative teaching and peer coaching

If you have undertaken such research previously and would like to make a presentation, please submit an abstract, no longer than 300 words by 15 August 2015 to mk.bhowmik@unesco.org. The RDTC advisory group will work as a scientific committee for reviewing your abstract and subsequently making decision of acceptance for presentation in the seminar. Depending on the quality of full papers received, there is a possibility to publish those in a seminar proceeding or in any other form.

Important Dates
- Deadline for submission of abstract: 15 August 2015
- Notification of acceptance: 30 August 2015
- Deadline for submission of the full paper and ppt: 15 October 2015