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Asia Pacific Ministerial Forum on ICT in Education 2017

11-12 May 2017, Seoul, Republic of Korea

Co-organized by
UNESCO Asia and the Pacific Regional Bureau for Education
Ministry of Education, Republic of Korea

Concept Note

Theme: Shaping Up ICT-supported Lifelong Learning for All

1. Background

On 25 September 2015, the 70th UN General Assembly formally adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that will frame policies and programmes of Member States over the next 15 years. The SDG4reaffirms education as a fundamental human right and a key catalyst for achieving wider development goals. It aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all"[1] through an integrated approach. This echoes the collective commitment of the international education community with the *Education 2030* agenda, which was set out during the World Education Forum (WEF) held in Incheon, Republic of Korea in May 2015. The core premise of *Education 2030* is to ensure comprehensive renewal of the education sector to build a lifelong learning society, targeting its development across all levels and areas, all the way from early childhood care and education to K-12 to vocational and tertiary education.

Notably, *Education 2030* and its associated *Framework for Action*[2] recognizes the immense potential of ICT in attaining the lifelong learning goal for all. It highlights the need for ICTs to "be harnessed to strengthen education systems, knowledge dissemination, information access, quality and effective learning, and more effective service provision". As an immediate follow-up to WEF, the *International Conference on ICT and Post-2015 Education Agenda*, was held in Qingdao, PR China in May 2015. The forum discussed proactive sector-wide strategies to leverage the power of ICT to transform education, as well as to establish targets and benchmarks to coordinate global partnerships. The ensuing Qingdao Declaration[3] underscores the potential of

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[1]   SDG4 http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/education/
[2]   The Education 2030 Framework for Action serves as the overall guiding framework for the
        implementation of Education 2030 and outlines how to translate the global commitment into practice
        at the global, regional and national levels. Retrieved from:
        http://www.unescobkk.org/fileadmin/user_upload/efa/TWG/39th_TWG/Framework_for_Action_Education_2030.pdf
[3]   The Qingdao Declaration http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002333/233352E.pdf

relevant ICT-based resources and solutions in providing access to lifelong learning opportunities, enhancing the quality of learning, supporting teacher innovations and knowledge-sharing, diversifying learning pathways and modalities, and enhancing the management of education systems.

UNESCO Bangkok takes advantage of this momentum by bringing together education policy makers in the region to the **Asia Pacific Ministerial Forum on ICT in Education (AMFIE) 2017** to revisit and refine the role of technologies for the Asia-Pacific Member States in achieving the Education 2030 agenda. Specifically, it aims to reach a high-level agreement on a regional strategy to unleash the potential of ICT to facilitate the achievement of SDG4.

2. Regional Strategy on using ICT to help achieve SDG4

Given the ever-growing interests in the potentials of ICT in education, it was not surprising that during the Asia Pacific Regional Education Conference (APREC) in August 2014, representatives from the Member States unanimously endorsed the inclusion of ICT in education as one of the Regional Priority Action Areas in Education 2030 agenda. The Bangkok Statement[4] reads:

> "10. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) for education
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> The effective and responsible use of ICTs in education is crucial to enable learners and teachers to adequately respond to the world of change. We will develop and utilize innovative educational platforms that improve access to education, in particular in remote areas, enhance the quality of learning that is responsive to diverse needs at all levels, and strengthen education management. We will ensure that ICTs are fully utilized to achieve the post-2015 education agenda."

AMFIE 2017 will be a great opportunity for education policymakers to deliberate and endorse the "Asia Pacific Regional Strategy on Using ICT to Facilitate the Achievement of Education 2030" ('Regional Strategy' from hereon), taking into account regional education priorities vis-à-vis diverse contextual realities among Member States. The Regional Strategy tentatively targets the next five years, with the 15-year long-term vision in mind. It aims to promote a more systematic and coordinated stakeholder engagement in aligning ICT in Education policies, programmes, and initiatives with regional and sub-regional educational priorities and targets. It will be inclusive, innovative, and empowering, with enough flexibility to acknowledge varying levels of development and capacity across the region.

It is in this context that UNESCO Bangkok, together with the Government of the Republic of Korea, co-organize AMFIE 2017 with the theme of ***"Shaping Up ICT-supported Lifelong Learning for All",*** in Seoul, Republic of Korea on 11-12 May 2017, in conjunction with the ASEM Education Ministerial Meeting. The AMFIE 2017 will facilitate collective deliberation among high-level officials, renowned international and national experts, and various stakeholders on how innovative technological advances can enhance access to and quality of diverse lifelong and life-

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[4] The Bangkok Statement or Asia Pacific Statement on Education Beyond 2015 is a statement that was endorsed by official representatives from the Member States who participated in the Asia Pacific Regional Education Conference on 6-8 August 2014, in Bangkok, Thailand. Retrieved from: http://www.unescobkk.org/education/conference/asia-pacific-regional-education-conference-aprec/asia-pacific-statement/

wide learning opportunities that empower individuals to successfully engage in and contribute to a knowledge-based society.

3. Focus Areas

Taking off from a situational analysis on the region's widening disparities and foreseen challenges in achieving education targets, the Regional Strategy will identify priority action areas that can be best addressed with the use of ICT, including but not limited to the following:

1) *Unlocking the potential of ICT to improve access to education*

Given the unfinished EFA agenda with 58 million children still out of school in 2014[5] and the unprecedented demand for higher education with projected enrollments at 263 million by 2025, it is crucial to look into viable and efficient ICT-supported educational delivery services. Accordingly, new modes of ICT-mediated education, such as massive online open courses (MOOCs), open educational resources (OER), open distance learning (ODL), use of social media, provisions for community-based e-learning access points, to name a few, have opened up flexible and inclusive lifelong learning opportunities to cater to a rich array of learning needs. Encouragingly, there is renewed attention toward utilizing low-tech yet innovative technologies to reach the marginalized (including women, girls, migrants, indigenous peoples, those living in remote areas, and many other minority groups) as well as new collective efforts aimed at developing effective assistive technologies for people with disabilities.

In addition, sensible outcomes-based monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should be considered even from the early stages of any ICT-supported educational programme design to facilitate data-informed upscaling and mainstreaming of the innovations.

2) *Enhancing the quality of learning toward developing core competencies for the 21st century*

Indeed, the fast-evolving knowledge-based global economy brings up the urgent need for education systems to transform in order to cope with emerging core competencies. It is notable that *Education 2030* listed the acquisition of relevant ICT and digital literacy skills as one of the thematic indicators[6] (16[1] and 16[2]) as relevant key competencies needed for employment, decent job attainment and entrepreneurship.

As such, ICT as an enabler in acquiring these competencies should be fully explored and made readily available to bring about innovations in teaching and learning practices as well as to support lifelong learners. Strategies to empower teachers as agents of change remains to be a primary concern in this area. Equally important, if not more, the education sector should provide a conducive environment that fosters safe, effective, and responsible use of ICT.

3) *Measuring the present and empowering a future*

With the firm commitment to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, *Education 2030* emphasizes the need for rigorous monitoring and evaluation to measure progress against education targets. At the global level, a set of thematic indicators has been agreed upon to track overall progress towards Education

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[5]   UNESCO-UIS. (2015). *Fixing the Broken Promise of Education for All: Findings from the Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children*. http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Documents/oosci-global-exsum-en.pdf

[6]   Thematic Indicators to Monitor the Education 2030 Agenda
        http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Documents/43-indicators-to-monitor-education2030.pdf

2030. Rational use of ICT in supporting comprehensive and timely monitoring and evaluation systems should be explored to facilitate data-informed policy formation as well as more efficient and transparent education management.

4) Leveraging Smart Partnerships

A huge emphasis will be given to the benefits of smart partnerships and collaborations – leveraging on sub-regional cooperation platforms, North-South and South-South Cooperation, Public-Private Partnerships, etc. – to alleviate the expanding digital divides within the region and within each country. It is hoped that the Regional Strategy will be instrumental in mobilising concerted support in the areas of research, capacity building, monitoring and evaluation, and other areas of expertise.

To facilitate this process, UNESCO Bangkok will form the Drafting Committee, inviting selected Education Ministers to represent each of the five sub-regions, along with key ICT in Education stakeholder groups in the region. The draft Regional Strategy will be circulated prior to AMFIE 2017, for initial review and discussions. Final deliberations and official endorsement will be made during the Forum proceedings.

4. Forum Objectives

1) Create opportunities to share policies, challenges, experiences, and innovations across countries in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond;
2) Deliberate on the Regional Strategy and explore country-level support towards providing ICT-supported education opportunities and services that value inclusion, innovation, and empowerment, specifically by:
   a. Identifying how ICTs can address issues related to access, diverse needs, lifelong learning, etc.;
   b. Facilitating educational innovation and transformation through ICT;
   c. Fostering a favourable ICT-supported learning environment to empower citizens; and
3) Promote bilateral and multi-lateral collaborations and other forms of partnerships within the region towards the efficient and effective use of ICT in education.

5. Noteworthy features of AMFIE 2017

AMFIE 2017 will be comprised of plenary sessions and break-out discussion groups for Member States and key regional partners to concretize the role of technologies in achieving the expanded vision of the Education 2030 agenda in Asia Pacific. Cases from Member States who have implemented initiatives guided by learnings gained from past AMFIEs are specifically encouraged to share their experiences.

One of the most important and unique outputs from AMFIE 2016 will be the "Asia Pacific Regional Strategy on Using ICT to Facilitate the Achievement of Education 2030", in line with regional education priorities and the Qingdao Declaration. For this year, the Ministerial Dialogue will engage the policy makers in deliberating and endorsing the draft Regional Strategy.

Agreements and concerns raised during the Forum will subsequently be disseminated during the annual Asia Pacific Meeting on Education 2030 (APMED)[7], to be held later in the year. This regional event will be an opportunity to obtain validation on the Regional Strategy and gather feedback from other education stakeholders, towards developing more concrete country-level implementation strategies.

Detailed information on the programme will be disseminated soon.

6. Expected Output

The organizers will finalize and circulate the "Asia Pacific Regional Strategy on Using ICT to Facilitate the Achievement of Education 2030", as endorsed during the Forum.

7. Date and venue

The official proceedings of AMFIE 2017 will be held in Seoul, Republic of Korea from 11-12 May 2017, immediately after the ASEM Education Ministerial Meeting. (specific venue: TBA)

8. Language

English is the main language of communication during the Forum. All presentations and reports should be prepared in English. Due to limited resources, the Secretariat will not be able to provide translations to other languages.

9. Participation

The Forum will bring together Ministers of Education and high officials in the field of education technology from 45 UNESCO Member States across the Asia-Pacific region, together with global/regional experts and key stakeholders.

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[7] The APMED2030 is a platform for regional consultations and coordination to support Member States in achieving Education 2030 targets. This runs in parallel to the global movement where the SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee was convened in May 2016 as a democratic, multi-stakeholder partnership, to provide both a global forum for discussion and a forward-looking vision on how to put the education agenda into action.