Central Asia Symposium on ICT in Education (CASIE):
Innovative ICT Practices on Lifelong Learning

28-30 January 2013
Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan

Concept Note

At the International Symposium on ICT in Education held last year (13-14 September 2011, Mongolia), Central Asian countries reported on their policies, promising practices and lessons learnt in the use of ICT in education.¹ It was evidenced in this symposium that Central Asian countries shared common issues and would need to be provided a regional platform where government officials and experts can share and discuss practices in using ICT in education, related policy options and potential solutions to the common challenges faced by their respective education systems. To this end, UNESCO Bangkok (Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau for Education) will be holding the Central Asia Symposium on ICT in Education (CASIE) in Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan on 28-30 January 2013, with financial support from Government of Japan and in collaboration with Tokyo Institute of Technology (Tokyo Tech).

Considering the similar contexts and challenges faced by the Central Asian countries, i.e. scattered population in vast territories with nomadic tradition, ICT can play an important role in reaching the unreached and promoting universal access to quality learning. In the highly connected and rapidly changing world, integrating ICT in the education system takes more than providing equal access to school education. It takes a more system-wide educational reform where learning beyond formal education is encouraged and multiple channels to diverse learning opportunities are recognized. Indeed, open access to learning throughout life has emerged as a vital component in training human resources for a knowledge-based society. With the help of technologies, such access to lifelong and life-wide learning has become possible beyond the boundary of time and space.

In this regard, it is timely and relevant to the situations in the Central Asia region to take stock of the promising policies and practices on ICT-supported open and distance learning. The Symposium will address two specific themes, but from a broader framework of ICT-in-Education policy: 1) ICT-enhanced policy formulation and management to support lifelong learning; and 2) innovative practices on open and distance learning, including mobile and smart learning technologies, as well as use of free and open software (FOSS) and community-based ICT learning centers.

The Symposium will provide a venue for information-sharing on policies, practices and challenges in planning and implementing an ICT-supported lifelong learning environment.

¹ Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan participated in the said symposium co-organized by UNESCO Bangkok and Tokyo Institute of Technology (Tokyo Tech) (http://www.unescobkk.org/education/leading-the-international-agenda/ict/ict-in-education-projects/policy/international-symposium-2011/)
focusing on said specific themes. It will also serve as an opportunity for the Central Asian countries to lay the groundwork for building national capacity in the use of ICT in Education at all levels.

**Objectives**
CASIE aims:
- To provide a platform for national education policy makers, practitioners and development partners to share issues and challenges that Central Asian countries are facing in integrating ICT into the education systems, with particular emphasis on the use of ICT for policy formulation and ICT-supported open and distance learning towards enabling lifelong learning;
- To promote collaboration and partnership among the Central Asian countries in the identification of solutions to similar issues and challenges in relation to the effective and efficient use of ICT in Education

**Themes**
1. Policies and initiatives to promote lifelong learning through ICT:
   - National policies, initiatives and programmes to support lifelong learning including ensuring coherence of ICT-related policies across sub-sectors and learning pathways/channels (e.g., general and vocational, formal, non-formal and informal)
   - Issues, challenges and future plans to promote and further articulate the use of ICT in policies and plans for lifelong learning.

2. Use of ICT for planning and managing lifelong learning policies
   - National programme and capacity to use ICT for evidence-based policy development on lifelong learning (e.g. integrating learning management system (LMS) with national EMIS)
   - Use of ICT-based data and information to support lifelong learning (i.e. beyond formal education and EMIS)
   - Issues, challenges and future plans to further integrate use of ICT to improve education planning and management towards lifelong learning

3. Open and distance learning through various ICT-supported modalities
   - Current status of ICT-supported open and distance learning, including but not limited to mobile/smart learning technologies for education for all, community-based learning through tele-centres/ multimedia/ eLearning centre, available content/ OER, use of FOSS, ICT-enabled teacher education in rural areas, etc.
   - Issues and future plans to enhance lifelong learning through ICT-supported open and distance learning.

**Date and venue**
28-30 January 2013 (2.5 days), Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan

**Languages of the Symposium**
Russian and English with simultaneous translation in both languages
Participants

- Participating countries: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Mongolia
- Three participants each from the six countries: a policy maker (e.g. head of department or above), an education planner, and an expert in ICT-in-Education (e.g. among officials from Ministries of Education and Ministries in charge of ICT).
- Officials from Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology in Japan
- More participants from the host country and other countries can be accepted upon review and approval by the Organizers, their attendance being at their own expense.
- International experts (TBD)

Expected Outputs:

- Relevant policies and implementation strategies are exchanged with regards to the various issues and challenges faced by the participating Central Asian countries in integrating ICT in education systems across the sectors
- Follow-up activities for cooperation to improve the use of ICT for lifelong learning and educational governance are discussed and agreed upon
- A website on the presentations and discussions during the symposium.

UNESCO contacts:

- The Symposium is organized by UNESCO Almaty and Bangkok Offices, with the Secretariat located in UNESCO Bangkok.
- Head of Secretariat: Mr Gwang-Chol Chang, Chief, Education Policy and Reform Unit, UNESCO Bangkok, gc.chang@unesco.org
- Ms Jonghwi Park, Programme Specialist, ICT in Education, UNESCO Bangkok, j.park@unesco.org
- Ms Satoko Yano, Programme Specialist, Education Policy and Reform Unit, UNESCO Bangkok, s.yano@unesco.org
- Ms Mel Tan, Programme Officer, ICT in Education, UNESCO Bangkok, mm.tan@unesco.org
- Ms Inna Melnikova, Programme Specialist, UNESCO Almaty Office, i.melnikova@unesco.org
- Mr Aigul KHALAFOVA, Programme Specialist, UNESCO Almaty Office, a.khalafova@unesco.org