CENTRAL ASIA SYMPOSIUM ON ICT IN EDUCATION 2014
Embracing Technologies, Empowering Teachers

27-29 May 2014
Tashkent, Republic of Uzbekistan

Concept Note

The Asia-Pacific region is known for its diversity. Within this region, where 60% of the world’s total population resides, every sub-region faces challenges as varied as its diverse nature in achieving quality education for all. The uniqueness of Central Asia is second to none. On top of the needs for adequate educational infrastructure that can ease geographical challenges, i.e. scattered population in vast territories, the countries in the sub-region are required to ensure the quality of learning so that their young generations can keep up with and adapt to the ever changing world.

In response to this exclusive nature of Central Asia, UNESCO Asia and the Pacific Regional Bureau for Education (UNESCO Bangkok) has organized since 2011, a sub-regional platform for the Member States to collectively deliberate on possible solutions to the issues, with particular focus on integrating technologies into the education system. It was evidenced that the platform provided an unparalleled opportunity where government officials, practitioners, development partners, and international experts shared and discussed policy options, promising practices, and lessons learnt in innovating the education systems through the effective use of ICTs. To sustain the sub-regional momentum, UNESCO Bangkok in collaboration with UNESCO Tashkent, UNESCO Institute for Information Technologies in Education (IITE), and the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan will be organizing the Central Asia Symposium on ICT in Education (CASIE) in Tashkent, Uzbekistan on 27-29 May 2014, in partnership with the Korea Education and Research Information Service (KERIS).

One of the major themes that emerged from CASIE 2013 was the sub-region’s urgent need to capacitate human resources on ICT-enabled innovation in education towards enhancing the quality of learning. The delegates and international experts stressed the importance of strengthening the “soft power” throughout various levels of human resources, with special attention given to teachers.

Without a doubt, ICTs have become an integral part of our lives in this digitally connected and rapidly changing 21st century society. Teachers’ role and capacity to adequately equip our young learners with relevant knowledge and skills have indeed become more critical than ever before. They face enormous pressure and demands to be key agents in “changing the culture of learning”, as pointed during CASIE.

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2 Past events include the International Symposium on ICT in Education held in Mongolia on September 2011 and the Central Asia Symposium on ICT in Education held in Kazakhstan in January 2013.
3 Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan participated in the said symposium co-organized by UNESCO Bangkok, with financial support from Government of Japan and in collaboration with Tokyo Institute of Technology (Tokyo Tech). (http://www.unescobkk.org/education/ict/casie2013)
2013. Case in point, teachers are expected to effectively integrate ICT into their teaching practices in a manner that goes beyond merely using technology to reinforce conventional teaching and learning approaches.

Some fundamental, but oftentimes neglected, questions emerge here: Have we created an environment where teachers could empower themselves to be able to cope with these unprecedented challenges and serve the critical role in transforming the culture of learning? Have we truly considered the different aspects of technology to be used when designing and extending support to teachers? Governments in the Central Asian countries are placing efforts to craft a favorable environment where various aspects of educational practices empower teachers, from policy to professional development to innovative technologies and to evidence-based guidance on classroom practices – to be in place before teachers can be empowered to perform to the best of their abilities.

It is in this context that the **Central Asia Symposium on ICT in Education 2014** calls for a collective effort amongst policy makers and officials from the region to take stock of the policy options and promising practices to create an empowering environment for teachers. The theme for this Symposium is “**Embracing Technologies, Empowering Teachers**”. The Symposium will address various aspects of such an environment, including 1) building comprehensive policy guidelines for teacher empowerment, 2) implementing teacher development programmes that work, 3) harnessing technologies that can support teachers to free up their time from administrative workload, and 4) systematic monitoring and evaluation of ICT-related projects that can inform teachers of evidence-based guidance.

Through various formats, such as plenary and break-out workshop sessions, the Symposium will 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. A new addition to the Symposium will be the Gallery Walk where various organizations and the private sector will be able to showcase their initiatives in supporting the effective integration of ICT into education systems. It will also provide opportunities for key players to initiate bilateral or multilateral partnerships with governments and other organizations.

**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 teacher empowerment with technology and for technology;
- 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

**Theme**

With the main theme of “Embracing Technologies, Empowering Teachers”, the Symposium will address the following four subthemes:

- Favourable policy environments to empower teachers;
- Teacher development programmes that help teachers and school leaders innovate teaching and learning practices (e.g. Competency-based teacher development that guides pedagogical requirements);
- Embracing the potential of technologies to ease teachers’ administrative workload (e.g. EMIS)

• Monitoring and evaluation that can inform teachers of evidence-based guidance in ICT-pedagogy integration at schools.

Date and Venue
27-29 May 2014 (3 days), in Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Language of the Symposium
Russian and English with simultaneous translation in both languages

Participants
• Participating countries: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. 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.
• 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 in Korea.
• Experts from UNESCO and other international institutions (TBD)
• Representatives of partner private sectors

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 enhance competency-based teacher development in ICT pedagogy and teacher empowerment with and for technology, as discussed and agreed upon;
• A website on the presentations and discussions during the symposium.

UNESCO Contacts
The Symposium is organized by UNESCO Bangkok and Tashkent Offices, with the Secretariat located in UNESCO Bangkok.

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