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QINGDAO DECLARATION

International Conference on
ICT AND POST-2015 EDUCATION

Seize digital opportunities. Lead education transformation.

23-25 May 2015

Qingdao City, the People's Republic of China

2015-2030: A journey towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning

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PREAMBLE

1.   We, Ministers responsible for Education, high-level government officials, representatives of civil society organizations, teachers' organizations, United Nations (UN) agencies and development partners, and members of academia and the private sector, have gathered at the International Conference on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Post-2015 Education from 23 to 25 May 2015 in Qingdao, the People's Republic of China, to affirm our collective understanding of how to unleash the full potential of ICT for education and for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We thank UNESCO, the Government of the People's Republic of China, the Qingdao Municipal Government and the Shandong Provincial Government for convening this milestone event.

2.   We reaffirm the new vision of Education 2030 articulated in the Declaration adopted at the World Education Forum 2015 in Incheon, Republic of Korea, with access, equity and inclusion, quality and learning outcomes – within a lifelong learning perspective – as the key pillars. We are convinced that equitable and inclusive access to quality education for all across life is an imperative for building sustainable and inclusive knowledge societies, and as a key means of implementation to achieve all of the SDGs.

3.   Inspired by a humanistic vision of education based on human rights and social justice, we further affirm that the remarkable advances in ICT and the rapid expansion of internet connectivity have made today's world increasingly interconnected, and rendered knowledge and familiarity with ICT essential for every girl and boy, woman and man.

4.   To achieve the goal of inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning by 2030, ICT – including mobile learning – must be harnessed to strengthen education systems, knowledge dissemination, information access, quality and effective learning, and more efficient service provision.

ACCESS AND INCLUSION

5.   Technology offers unprecedented opportunities to reduce the long-existing learning divide. The application of ICT is essential if we are to deliver on our commitment in the Incheon Declaration to non-discrimination in education, gender equality and women's empowerment for sustainable development. We commit to ensure that all girls and boys have access to connected digital devices and a relevant and responsive digital learning environment by 2030, irrespective of their disabilities, social or economic status, or geographic location. In striving to achieve universal access to basic education and skills development, we recommend that all education stakeholders recognize enrolment in quality-assured online courses as an alternative or complementary mode to face-to-face programmes of study.

6.   We stress the value of ICT-based solutions in ensuring that, in the wake of a conflict or natural disaster resulting in the destruction of schools or universities or in the impossibility of normal operations, the right to education is enforced. We therefore invite governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and technology providers to cooperate in designing and implementing, quickly and efficiently and whenever they are needed, the most suitable solutions.

OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES AND OPEN SOLUTIONS

Open Educational Resources (OERs) provide education stakeholders with opportunities to improve the quality of, and expand access to, textbooks and other forms of learning content, to catalyze the innovative use of content, and to foster knowledge creation. We commit to developing sector-wide

strategies and capacity building programmes to fully realize the potential of OERs to expand access to lifelong learning opportunities and achieve quality education.

7.   We recommend that stakeholders facilitate access to Open Access (OA) Journals in Education for teachers, researchers and learners, and fully evaluate the potential of Free and Open Source Software (FOSS) and Open Standards for the development of ICT solutions, including for learners with disabilities and for promoting learning in the first language.

QUALITY LEARNING

8.   We commit to developing well-informed long-term policies and strategies to unleash the potential of ICT to achieve greater quality in education and transform learning. We recognize that there is a need to redefine learning outcomes and the way in which we organize and assess learning if we want our education systems to prepare lifelong learners — both children and adults — to thrive in networked knowledge societies and succeed in economies that are increasingly reliant on technology.

9.   We recognize that the ability to leverage ICT for learning is no longer a specialized skill; it is foundational to success in today's societies. We therefore acknowledge the need to integrate basic ICT skills and information literacy into primary and secondary education curricula. We support the adaptation of learning assessments in order to reflect the use of ICT and its impact on learning and on outcomes.

10.   Successful integration of ICT into teaching and learning requires rethinking the role of teachers and reforming their preparation and professional development. It calls for promoting a culture of quality in all its aspects: staff support, student support, curricula design, course design, course delivery, strategic planning and development. We will therefore ensure that teacher training institutions are equipped and prepared to use ICT adequately to expand the benefits of training and professional development programmes to all teachers, and to act as the vanguard for technology-supported innovations in education. We also commit to providing teachers with system-wide support for the pedagogical use of ICT, to incentivize teacher innovation, and to develop networks and platforms that allow teachers to share experiences and approaches that may be of use to peers and other stakeholders.

LIFELONG LEARNING PATHWAYS

11.   We reaffirm that lifelong learning is the guiding principle to enhance individuals' knowledge, skills and competences for work and life. We recommend that ICT be used to deliver education and training, including technical and vocational education and training, in both formal and non-formal settings, at all times and in all places, as it can improve and diversify learning pathways, improve quality, and further reach vulnerable and underserved groups including rural youth and adults, women and girls, out-of-school youth, and people with disabilities.

ONLINE LEARNING INNOVATIONS

12.   While we are aware of the challenges linked to quality assurance, pedagogical effectiveness and certification, we recognize the benefits of well-organized online learning courses for learners, institutions, systems and society at large. Online learning, including in the form of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), has the potential to build new learning pathways towards tertiary education and lifelong learning. We therefore recommend that governments, institutions and other stakeholders further consider and harness the opportunities brought by online learning innovations.

13.   We recommend that efforts be made to explore the potential of 'big data' for enhancing online learning in order to inform our understanding of students' behavior and learning, and to improve the design and organization of online courses. In this context, governments must develop policies and systems to ensure secure, appropriate and ethical use of data, including safeguarding the privacy and confidentiality of students' personally identifiable information.

QUALITY ASSURANCE AND RECOGNITION OF ONLINE LEARNING

14.   We consider quality assurance and recognition as crucial and interlinked elements for enhancing the relevance and credibility of online learning, and for supporting lifelong learning and professional progression and mobility. We call for the establishment of transparent quality assurance measures of online learning that support reliable, valid and credible assessment.

15.   We recognize the potential of innovative ICT-based approaches in certification and assessment, including competency, portfolio, online badging and peer assessment, as tools that can broaden routes to

employment, fulfilment and achievement of qualifications by all learners. We call for fair and transparent recognition of learning outcomes and qualifications acquired through online learning. We encourage Member States and other stakeholders, including education and training providers, to use ICT to promote recognition, validation and accreditation of the knowledge, skills and competencies acquired through informal and non-formal settings, and to build bridges between formal, non-formal and informal learning.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

16.   We commit to developing comprehensive national monitoring and evaluation systems to generate sound evidence for policy formulation on the integration, use and impact of ICT in education, in order to enhance the management of education systems, ensure accountability, and understand the key roles that ICT increasingly plays in the transmission of knowledge, the acquisition of new skills and competencies, and in the development of values and attitudes that are relevant to the building of sustainable and peaceful societies.

17.   We further recommend that governments and other concerned partners support capacity development in data collection, analysis and reporting at the country, regional and global levels. We request the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) and other partners to support countries in reinforcing and sustaining efforts to establish the appropriate national-level mechanisms and processes. We commit to continue to report accurate and complete data in a timely manner to the UIS, facilitating its work and advancing its mission to build and maintain a global repository for ICT in education data.

18.   We recommend that the Global Education Monitoring Report, to be hosted and published by UNESCO, uses UIS core indicators on ICT in education to provide regular global-level monitoring of ICT in education.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND PARTNERSHIP

19.   We encourage governments, industry partners and all other education stakeholders to join forces and share resources to create equitable, dynamic, accountable and sustainable learner-centred digital learning ecosystems.

20.   We recognize the growing importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships for successful ICT in education policies, based on cooperation between governments, industry partners, civil society organizations – including teachers' organizations – and academia.

21.   We call for further consultation and dialogue between governments and the private sector to design scalable innovative funding mechanisms to secure the financial resources needed to unleash the full potential of ICT for learning, in line with the 2030 education agenda.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

22.   We invite UNESCO to explore the feasibility of three activities in support of international cooperation in the field of ICT in education, in line with Education 2030:

1. an international fund to assist developing countries, with special focus on the least developed countries, to use ICT to achieve their national goals in education;
2. a global network of expertise and knowledge-sharing on ICT in education, including the specialized Institutes and Centres under the auspices of UNESCO, which would serve the needs of three different user communities – namely policy-makers, researchers and teachers; and
3. a clearinghouse of good practices and lessons learned on technology-supported innovations in education.