



United Nations Educational, Scientific
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The Newsletter
of UNESCO's
Education Sector

Education TODAY

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The arrival of new information and communications technologies (ICTs) was heralded as a revolution for the world of learning and fired the hopes of many. But have ICTs fulfilled their promise of better and cheaper education for more students? Focus, a four-page dossier, reports.

EDITO

I once found a series of quotations about the impact of technology on education that I still find illuminating. The claims began in 1841 with the statement that “the inventor or introducer of the blackboard deserves to be ranked among the best contributors to learning and science, if not among the greatest benefactors of mankind”. Next came the statement in 1940 that “the motion picture is the most revolutionary instrument introduced into education since the printing press”. By 1957, however, another author could write that “it now seems clear, however, that television offers the greatest opportunity for the advancement of education since the introduction of printing by moveable type”.

The next pundit ignored all that, claiming in 1962 that “programmed learning is the first major technological innovation in education since the invention of printing”. By then computers had arrived on the scene, giving rise to the comment, in 1967, that “the impact of computers on society, and hence on education, has been compared to that of moveable type and the printing press since Gutenberg”. Finally – although I expect that the future will see plenty more hype as newer technologies appear – a conference in 2000 made the observation that “Internet and communication technologies are revolutionizing the format and delivery of education”.

Juxtaposing these claims with the development of education over the past century inspires three comments. First, it is clearly not easy to create an educational revolution. Despite all these supposedly revolutionary innovations we see evolution, not revolution. Second, it is significant that four of these six quotations do not refer back to the previous innovation but to the invention of printing. It seems that the development of printing did stimulate a real revolution in education, although its effects operated over many centuries. Third, whilst expecting any single technology magically to transform education is a chimera, we should not despair of the general potential of technology to improve education. The example of the large multi-media distance-teaching universities – the mega-universities that now exist in many countries – shows that the judicious use and blending of technologies can simultaneously broaden access to education, improve its quality and lower the cost.

Indeed, some might actually call that a revolution!

John Daniel

Assistant Director-General for Education

A school with a view

Despite economic hardships, one South African school refuses to despair



©Thobeka Ndabula

Rina Ramollo and Retsebile Thamaga dance to raise funds for their school

Once shunned as a modest handicraft college, Bokgoni Technical High School in Pretoria today has students flocking to attend. It now counts 1,300 students, up from 130 in 1997, and school performance has soared. How did they do it? The short answer is that Bokgoni exploited its connections with UNESCO's Associated Schools Project Network (ASPnet), comprising some 7,500 schools around the world.

Situated in one of the capital's ever-growing poor black urban areas, the school is not immune to the social challenges facing the rest of the community: unabated crime, abject poverty and HIV/AIDS, that are

tearing the community apart. Some 70 per cent of the students come from an informal settlement, where unemployment is reaching cataclysmic proportions. Teachers come face to face daily with hungry pupils. But Bokgoni did not wait for government intervention.

"We planted our garden with vegetables for our needy children. This was also informed by ASPnet's principle of creating a productive and giving society," says George Sono, a computer literacy teacher and ASPnet coordinator.

Four years ago, the school joined hands with three other ASPnet schools to refurbish a dilapidated school in the nearby township – Reitumetse High School. "We asked learners to donate at least 5 Rand and the response was overwhelming. We also spent a night playing games at Clapham High, another ASPnet school, and selling stuff to raise funds. Reitumetse High now looks brighter and lively," he says.

Fighting HIV/AIDS

Like the rest of the society, Bokgoni is faced with a powerful enemy – HIV/AIDS. In the past six months thirteen parents have died, adding still more students to the long list of South Africa's orphans, explains Sono. "Sometimes we have three deaths a week. And almost all are AIDS-related". Deputy principal Bopape says the situation is affecting learning and teaching. "We are faced with traumatized learners who need counselling, food and under-

standing. HIV/AIDS is threatening our education system," he says.

Through the ASPnet philosophy of "preparing children and young people to meet the challenges of an increasingly complex and inter-dependent world," the school has initiated a project to respond to the HIV/AIDS threat. The students help AIDS orphans at school and at a nearby hospital – the Mohau Care Centre. They pay visits to the centre and donate some food and play with the children. Fundraising is a big challenge. "To bring in some cash, they dance at local and national functions and weddings," says deputy principal Bopape.

Forming a government

"We realize that the only way to deal with these problems is to encourage learners to get involved," says Violet Raphiri, one of the teachers. The students have formed a "cabinet", with each one allocated a "Ministry" or portfolio – the Ministry for Environment, Education, Health, Sports and Welfare, etc. "As Health Minister my responsibility is to come up with a plan that will help us spread the AIDS message to the school, youth and the community," says Kholofelo Mokwena, 16, a Grade 10 student.

Chairman of "the Cabinet", Kgaohelo Ramohwebo, 16, says they have developed a project to help needy students with food and uniforms. "So we ask our past students to donate their uniforms to them."

They are also battling to raise funds to start a cricket team, a sport confined to predominantly white and up-market schools, because "we learnt from ASPnet that we should strive for great achievements," says Kgaohelo.

The story of Bokgoni is repeated daily in many an ASPnet school around the world. A global evaluation made public on ASPnet's 50th anniversary in August 2003 concluded that ASPnet's potential to drive new thinking in education is unique.

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Better schools, better learning

A UNESCO initiative helps equip over 400 needy schools in the Palestinian Territories

It was a nightmare for schoolmaster Abdul Rahim Ahmad Qadous every morning as he entered the Beit Wazan Primary School near Nablus in the Palestinian Territories. “What would happen if one of the children fell off the staircase that has no handrail,” he used to ask himself. Today all is safe. A handrail has been fixed, thanks to a new UNESCO aid scheme.

The Beit Wazan Primary School is one of 460 in the West Bank and Gaza that received \$500 each from UNESCO in 2003. The beneficiary schools were selected among over 2000 by the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education. The total disbursement was \$230,000. The funds served to refurbish schools in urgent need of repair, provide new laboratory supplies, books and learning materials.

Dwindling resources

Due to the current crisis, schools are seriously lacking funds and it is increasingly difficult to collect school fees from parents. The events of the last three years have made it nearly impossible for many families to eke out a living.

Last year, for the Beit Wazan School, for instance, tuition fees brought in only \$800, as opposed to the annual \$3,000, usually collected. This was not enough to buy laboratory tools or other needed equipment.

“The timing was perfect as the school had hit one of its worst years,” says Abdul Rahim Ahmad Qadous, the schoolmaster. His submission included a list of basic items, such as a sport mattress, a CD player, sixteen library books, a few garden tools and the handrail for the staircase, the source of his nightmares.

“The new books are more important than anything else,” says Tamer Nafe, a Grade 10 pupil. “Now we have a variety of books on religion, science and general information. These are essential to enrich our knowledge of the world around us,” he adds.

Fear and violence

The Al Quds Primary School for Boys and Girls, another of the beneficiary schools, has two major problems, according to Amneh Imran, the school principal. “The tensions here are very tough and then there’s the violence among children,” she says. Located on the southern outskirts of the West Bank city of Nablus, the 237 pupils come from the surrounding villages and nearby Balata refugee camp. “Boys are generally violent toward boys, but sometimes they become violent toward girls too,” Imran comments.

“We keep the children away from the friction points where trouble might flare up,” she adds, “and allow them access, under supervision of course, to the school laboratory where they can work on useful experiments.”

When the school opened in 2001, Imran says, there were no funds for laboratory appliances. In normal circumstances, she would have had to wait for seven years to get what the \$500 bought her.

Basri Saleh, Director-General of International and Public Relations in the Ministry of Education and Higher Education welcomes the new scheme. “The mere idea of helping as many needy schools as possible is a splendid chance to move ahead,” he comments. “But,” he adds, “the living conditions remain extremely difficult and more is needed.”

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New learning materials ease up tensions among Palestinian schoolchildren

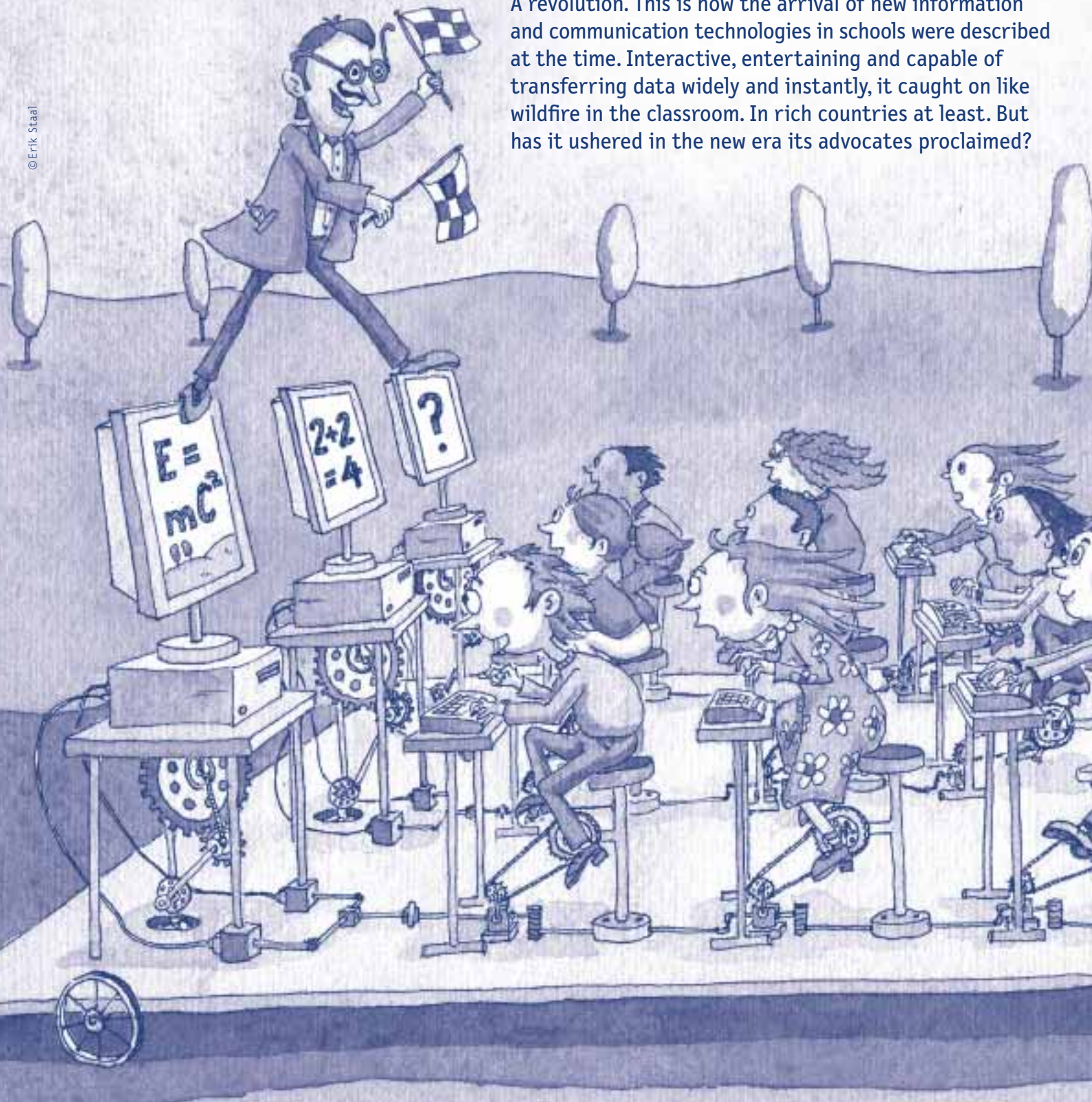


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New Technologies: **Mirage or**

A revolution. This is how the arrival of new information and communication technologies in schools were described at the time. Interactive, entertaining and capable of transferring data widely and instantly, it caught on like wildfire in the classroom. In rich countries at least. But has it ushered in the new era its advocates proclaimed?

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Miracle?



“It is destined to revolutionize our educational system and (...) in a few years it will supplant largely, if not entirely, the use of textbooks.” The computer? A virtual world linked by the Internet? No. This revolution was films, predicted in 1922 by Thomas Edison, the American who invented the electric light bulb.

More than a century later, films have not replaced school textbooks, any more than radio or TV have replaced teachers. Yet the experts always think such inventions will turn out to be absolutely vital for teachers. But radio and TV, though they have proved useful (see box p. 6), have remained just tools, or even gadgets in the worst cases. They have not revolutionized the classroom.

Are today's new information and communication technologies (ICTs) really a turning-point? The Internet and the growth of digital media fired the hopes of many. With one click, you could get information as easily in a remote Kenyan village as in Manhattan. But after several years of huge Internet expansion, where are we? Has the heralded revolution really happened?

No genuine renewal

“ICTs have not eliminated the most pressing problems that education systems face,” comments Vladimir Kinelev, Director of the UNESCO Institute for Information Technologies in Education (IITE). The problem, he says, is that “attempts to improve education through the use of ICTs suffer from the absence of sound education paradigms that could support genuine renewal.”

However, the new technologies are certainly quite different from earlier media. “The novelty is that users can now link up with each other and be interactive,” says Richard Sweet, principal administrator in the OECD's Education and Training Division. “That's something totally new. You can be much more active and creative.”

The relationship between time and space has changed and you no longer have to be physically present to take a course. You can use several media at the same time and transmit material instantly and very cheaply. And you can customize teaching to fit the level of the pupil and present complex ideas vividly and effectively.

“A geometry teacher who would need three to five hours to explain a theory on the blackboard can now do it in just one using computer visuals,” says Ryan Watkins, who teaches educational technology at George Washington University, in the United States. New technology attracts students by being more flexible, entertaining and interactive.

Massive investment

Schools realized this and quickly adopted it. The thirty OECD member countries have invested massively in ICTs for education – \$16 billion in 1999, or between 1 and 2 per cent of all their education spending. Most of the money went on equipment and infrastructure.

Internet penetration of schools has actually been spectacular. In the United States, it soared from 14 per cent in 1996 to 63 per cent in 1999. It has grown fastest in higher education. In 1999, more than 90 per cent of American students went online regularly and 50 per cent every day (Merrill Lynch, 2000). Even more striking, nearly 40 per cent of courses included use of the Internet, compared with 25 per cent of them in 1997 and 15 per cent in 1996. The arrival of the Web also greatly boosted distance →

World Summit on the Information Society

Universal access to information and education, freedom of expression and cultural diversity are the four principles for future knowledge societies. This is UNESCO's message to the World Summit on the Information Society to take place in Geneva, Switzerland, 10-12 December 2003.

UNESCO is planning a variety of special events to underpin this message: a Ministerial Round Table Meeting during the 32nd Session of the General Conference in October 2003, a UNESCO High-Level Colloquium bringing together world leaders on the eve of the Summit, and four side events devoted respectively to education, culture, science and media, at the Summit meeting itself.

UNESCO is also publishing a series of ten titles summarizing essential issues related to the information society.

More on: www.unesco.org/webworld

TV and radio: the pioneers

Long before computers and the Internet, radio and TV had arrived in schools. From the early 1950s, educational radio programmes were used in classrooms and relayed by teachers almost everywhere in Latin America, Asia and Africa. More recently, Indonesia has used radio to reach schoolchildren scattered in the country's outlying islands. In the 1990s, with help from UNESCO, Mongolia used radio to show women how to set up and run small businesses.

The educational possibilities of TV were also widely seized on but with very mixed results. In 1960, China became the first country to use TV and radio for distance learning in higher education. In the 1970s, many thought these media could improve education in developing countries, and international organizations supported production of televised secondary school courses, notably in Côte d'Ivoire and El Salvador.

But the results were disappointing. Teachers did not like such interference by the central government and the new methods

were very costly. Most of the projects stopped when foreign funding dried up. They failed because they didn't meet the real needs of teachers who were provided inadequate assistance in using the technology, and the technology itself was often unreliable, according to Larry Cuban, professor of education at Stanford University, in the United States.

One exception was the success of Telesecundaria, a TV project launched in Mexico in 1965 to expand secondary education in remote and rural areas. Its national broadcasts contained the same courses as in normal schools and went out twice a day by satellite. The audience soared and in 2001, the project reckoned it had 963,000 pupils watching in 16,000 schools. Some estimates said the failure rate in these schools was lower than the secondary school average.

Radio and TV are accessible in the very poorest regions and continue to play an important part in formal and non-formal education.

learning. United Kingdom's Open University, founded in 1969, has been using multimedia material alongside face-to-face teaching.

For schools the benefits are twofold: it's a tool that helps learning and it also gives children key skills for the job market because, unlike TV and radio, it calls for special abilities. "To use the new technology properly, you must know how to use various computer programmes, how to choose relevant and serious information on the Web and how to use databases," says Kurt Larsen, principle administrator at the OECD's Centre for Educational Research and Development. These are indispensable skills in the future information society.

The problem is that ICTs, the backbone of globalization, are still the reserve of rich countries. But some developing countries have seized on them. Between 1998 and 2000, Internet users in Brazil increased from 1.7 to 9.8 million and from 2,500 to 25,000 in Uganda. OECD countries, however, still account for 79 per cent of the world's 400 million users. And, although South Asia has 20 per cent of the world population, it has only 1 per cent of its Internet users.

Big contrasts

Investment in new technologies for poor schools, especially in Africa, where even the most basic tools are lacking, seems inappropriate. When textbooks, chalk, drinking water

and teachers are in short supply, such investment is not seen as a priority.

Even in rich countries, there are big contrasts between levels of ICT. For example, in 1999, Norway had a computer for every five secondary school students, while over twenty-five students in Belgium and more than thirty-five in Portugal had to share one machine.

So current educational inequalities may very well increase. In many countries, girls are kept away from new technologies, just as they are kept out of school. In 2001, only 22 per cent of Internet users in Asia were women, 38 per cent in Latin America and just 6 per cent in the Middle East.

In addition, educational material is not always easily exported. Much of it is made in

UNESCO: teacher training is key

Hundreds of Cambodian teachers are currently being trained in basic ICT skills to promote better learning. In Mozambique and South Africa, local communities participate in the development of gender-sensitive ICT packages based on local experiences, knowledge and learning needs. On the Internet, a portal devoted to teacher training in ICT offers online resources (<http://www.unescobkk.org/ips/ict/ict.htm>).

These few examples give an idea of the variety of UNESCO's projects to promote ICTs in education. Others are being launched in all regions, notably in Africa, Asia and the Pacific. They focus on training teachers and educators, assisting countries in developing sound ICT policies and defining indicators to measure the impact of ICTs in the classroom.

UNESCO has also established an Intersectoral Working Group on Open and Distance Learning on teacher education.

The UNESCO Institute for Information Technologies in Education (IITE) plays a leading role in strengthening national capacities in applying ICTs in education through research, training and clearing-house activities.

→ the United States, which complicates things. Schools can use programmes such as Word with scrappy knowledge of English but would need to know more to follow an online mathematics course.

Even in rich countries, where ICTs have been in classrooms for several years now, things are far from ideal. New technologies have not yet proved effective everywhere, as shown by a survey done last year among Israeli school-children aged 9 to 13 by Joshua Angrist, of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), and Victor Lavy, of Jerusalem's Hebrew University. They compared marks obtained in maths and Hebrew by 13-year-olds in schools with computers and found that, not only were they no better, but they were even worse than those of students who didn't have computers.

"There is little or no evidence that ICTs have fulfilled their early promise of better and cheaper education for more children," according to the OECD¹.

Teachers must adapt

It is not enough to put good computers and Internet connections in classrooms. They have to be used properly. This means schools must change their methods and find new ways to convey knowledge. ICTs will be little use if they simply produce electronic versions of existing books or put classroom lessons online. The Internet, digital TV and electronic publishing can take things much further along.

Teachers, who can now be e-mailed out of school hours, also have to adapt. "New technologies mean a teacher's authority is based less on what he or she knows than on how they pass on what they know," says Alexandra Draxler, who put together the book *Technologies for Education*², published last year by UNESCO.

But are schools willing to change? "This is one of the biggest challenges of ICTs," says Cedric Wachholz, programme specialist in UNESCO Bangkok. "If pupils are just cutting and pasting on the screen, they won't learn anything. A lot of mistakes have been made introducing ICTs in schools. Some countries have bought an enormous amount of equipment without realizing how very different the technology is. Teachers have to be trained not only to use the tool but also to change the way they teach."

Computers in schools: 10 points to avoid past errors

- 1 Ensure that in the initial stages people are not demoralized by weak or disastrous results when working with computers.
- 2 Make provision for maintenance budgets. In the past, many attempts to bring computers to schools failed due to the shortcomings of the hardware.
- 3 Choose your software carefully. Fortunately, a dearth of software is no longer the bottleneck.
- 4 Train teachers, as lack of teacher training is the number one difficulty.
- 5 Get computers going immediately after their installation, in order to ensure the political survival of the initiative.
- 6 Choose among the three schools of thought in the use of computers in schools. The first sees the computer as a teaching machine, be it for spelling or simple arithmetic. The second to develop thinking skills, and third to prepare students to use computers at work.
- 7 Don't be over-ambitious in the beginning. The most lofty and noble use of computers is to teach how to think. And this is where the danger lies. It requires a long period of preparation of teachers.
- 8 Use the computer to save time, energy and drudgery. Its most unremarkable use is to drill students in arithmetic operations, solving equations, correcting spelling and so on. This is what has really worked in schools.
- 9 Check existing software and decide whether there are exceptional cases where new software needs to be commissioned.
- 10 Teach students to use computers as a productive tool. Teach them to use a word processor, a spreadsheet, a database and graphic tools. The next task is to develop strategies to use these productivity tools. Keyboard training is a good way to start.

Based on a text by Claudio de Moura Castro, available on TechKnowLogia (www.techknowlogia.org)

OECD agrees. "If schools don't break with their old habits, ICTs won't work and will just remain a supplementary tool," comments Sweet.

New technologies have great promise and can revolutionize learning but only if those involved give themselves the means to do so. Like any tool, it all depends on what people do with it. "And we have to remember," says Draxler, "that learning also has an emotional side that can't be handled by a machine." ●

1. *E-Learning: The Partnerships Challenge*, OECD, 2001.
2. *Technologies for Education* by Wadi D. Haddad and Alexandra Draxler. Produced for UNESCO by Knowledge Enterprise, 2002.

There is little or no evidence that ICTs improve the quality of education



© D. Roger/UNESCO

Including every child

Negative attitudes are the main obstacle to educating children with disabilities

Jetha Murmu lives in south-east Nepal. Because he is blind, Jetha started school at age 11. He is now in Grade 5 and has a teacher who knows Braille.

Jetha is one of the lucky few. More than 90 per cent of disabled children in developing countries are not in school. And disability will be around for some time: for example, each year, due to vitamin A deficiency, 500,000 lose part of their vision and insufficient iodine in mothers' diets leaves millions of babies at risk of mental impairment.

"Negative attitudes are the main obstacle to schooling children with disabilities," says Kenneth Eklindh of UNESCO's Section for Inclusive Education. "Some people believe that educating the disabled is pointless, that there are already too many problems educating 'normal' children," says Xu Bailun, who runs the Golden Key Research Center for Education for the Visually Impaired in China.

Inclusiveness

Most experts accept the principle of inclusive education championed by the World Conference on Special Needs Education (Salamanca, Spain) in 1994 – that all children should learn together in regular schools. But things are not so simple. Schools must be equipped to respond to their needs and teachers prepared to accept them in their classrooms. The dilemma, says Fred Heddel of Inclusion International, "is that there is less specialized attention available in mainstream schools, but if you want disabled children to become independent adults, it doesn't make sense to exclude them early on".

Dealing with inclusiveness in the classroom puts additional pressure on teachers, particularly if they have to apply the curriculum rigidly, which is often the case, says Eklindh. "Teachers repeatedly find themselves controlled by school inspectors who are not open to inclusiveness," he says. A Namibian case study from 2001 found that

teachers still think it means extra work and should be an extramural activity.

Despite the problems, many countries are making efforts to reach out to the disabled although the high cost of inclusive education remains a major difficulty.

New global drive

A "Flagship" programme on EFA and the Right to Education for Persons with Disabilities: Towards Inclusion was recently launched by a number of organizations to raise awareness and lobby governments, donors and NGOs. One of its aims is to ensure that educating children with disabilities is included in national planning and adequately resourced. "Disabled people can no longer

rely on charity," says Kicki Nordstrom, President of the World Blind Union.

Although figures are hard to come by, it is believed that few countries have included inclusive education in their EFA planning. The World Bank-led Fast-Track funding initiative is currently in the process of adding the education of children with disability to its assessment guidelines, which means that it will become a criterion for joining the Initiative.

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Deaf pupils at Duang Prateep Foundation School in Bangkok

3 questions to Xu Bailun

Xu Bailun is blind and Director of the Golden Key Research Center for Education for the Visually Impaired in China

1 When did you become blind?
In 1971, at the age of 41 I lost my eyesight in a medical accident. I was an architect at the time and lived in Beijing. After one year of total sadness, I thought of those blind children more unfortunate than myself and in 1985, I started my work for the visually impaired.

In Guangxi alone, over 2,000 blind children were enrolled, and some past pupils are already making their own living. Due to our success, the central government decided to promote inclusive education in China.

2 What is the Golden Key Project?
Golden Key is an NGO committed to promoting education for China's visually impaired. Since 1996, the centre is operating in poverty-stricken areas, such as Guangxi Zhuang and Inner Mongolia Autonomous Regions, where today, 95 per cent of blind children are in school. These children are enrolled in their own village and in the same classrooms as their sighted classmates. The teachers receive special training and support.

3 If three measures could put the world's disabled children into school, what would they be?

First, have the right to education for the disabled respected. Second, promote inclusive education, that is, enrolling disabled children in the nearest regular school. The schools should adapt to meet the educational needs of these children. Third, have governments and NGOs co-operate. Governments have the administrative force and power, and NGOs have the passion, expertise and funding capacity. Together they can form a great alliance.

EFA Working Group meets again

The fourth meeting of the Working Group on Education for All took place at UNESCO Paris on 23 and 24 July. Attended by some fifty-seven people representing countries, international agencies and civil society as well as twenty observers, the Working Group's task is to strengthen the global alliance for achieving the EFA and the Millennium Development Goals.

Debates focused on the EFA "flagships", and in particular on the U.N. Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI), the HIV/AIDS and Education Initiative, and the U.N. Literacy Decade (2003-2012).

"Our aim was to reach an understanding about the nature of the flagships, their links to each other and their role at the country level," says Abhimanyu Singh, Lead Manager of the Dakar

Follow-up Unit. Concern was expressed about the potential contradiction between flagships which exist as separate initiatives and a more holistic approach to EFA. The Working Group proposed closer in-country links between stakeholders to enhance the contribution of flagships to planning and implementing the EFA agenda.

Participants also agreed that the World Bank-led Fast Track funding initiative should be speeded up. Other discussions focused on the Global EFA Monitoring Report, civil society's contribution to EFA and planning for the Third High-Level Group Meeting, in New Delhi (10-12 November 2002).

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Developing Afghanistan's education system

Afghanistan's Independent High Commission for Education, charged in November 2002 to make proposals for a national education system, adopted its report in Kabul in early July. The report will now be submitted for government approval.

The report emphasizes the principle of free basic education, non-discrimination and balanced educational development in all regions. The Commission recommends that all discriminatory constraints affecting the education of girls and women be eliminated. Proposals include strategies for capacity-building, educational governance and community participation. Education for human rights, democracy and a culture of peace will be developed.

Basic education will be the cornerstone of Afghanistan's educational objectives and a national EFA plan will be developed. The Commission recommends a national literacy campaign and, as a priority, the provision of vocational training for out-of-school youth, including ex-combatants. The Commission's report also addresses secondary and higher education.

"Our work involved reflection, studies and extensive consultations with national and international experts," says Saif R. Samady, the Commission's Chairman. "I believe it contributes significantly to the development of education in Afghanistan".

World tour

→ On 10 June, Cambodia launched its National EFA Plan, in a ceremony which brought together 250 participants. The Prime Minister announced that government funding to education would increase from 18 to 20 per cent of the national budget.

→ The 5th East and South East Asia National EFA Coordinators' Meeting was held in Bangkok on 10 September. Their discussions focused on literacy, decentralization of EFA planning and challenges in implementing the national plans.

→ The First Forum on Education for All in Central America took place in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, 27-29 August. It was attended by Ministries of Education, EFA focal points, national commissions, civil society organizations, UN agencies and the donor community.

→ Nine countries in Latin America/Caribbean have developed their National EFA plans: Cuba, Brazil, Bolivia, Ecuador, Dominican Republic, Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay and Venezuela. El Salvador, Mexico and Panama are about to officially approve theirs.

→ The World Bank and UNICEF organized a 3-day workshop in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, from 25-28 June, which brought together some 300 participants from East and Central Africa. Participants discussed EFA funding options to increase access, particularly for girls and disadvantaged groups.

→ Regional consultations on adult education in the context of the CONFINTEA Mid-Term Review (see page 10) were held in Hammamet, Tunisia and Dakar, Senegal, in July. On that occasion the U.N. Literacy Decade (2003-2012) was launched in the Arab States.

→ On 8 July, UNESCO Beirut and the Arab Resource Collective, a network of NGOs, organized a meeting to discuss EFA in Lebanon. The meeting chose the Al-Hariri Foundation as the National EFA/NGO focal point, which will henceforth take the lead in coordinating EFA and in forming theme-based working groups.

Spotlight on adult education

Over 300 participants from around 100 countries gathered at the CONFINTEA Mid-Term Review (Bangkok, 6-11 September) to assess recent progress in adult education and set targets to be evaluated at the next International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI) scheduled for 2009.

Country reports prepared for the conference revealed significant differences in why countries promote adult education. Developing countries set their sights on basic education and women's empowerment

with a view to achieving sustainable growth, while industrialized countries push lifelong learning in order to meet the needs of the labour market. Other reasons included: responding to an increase in anti-democratic movements (Sweden), building the capacity of legal services (Egypt), strengthening civil society (countries in transition), imparting skills in democracy and good governance (Slovenia) and building new state institutions (Nigeria).

In opening the conference, Assistant Director-General for Education John Daniel called on adult educators to focus less on advocacy and instead "to seize on all new methods, approaches, technologies and

modalities that can increase the scope, scale and efficiency of adult education".

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Top of the class

The best readers are Finnish children. But those in Japan, Hong Kong-China and the Republic of Korea come top in maths and science. And the poorest results are in Latin America, according to an OECD-UNESCO report based on data from the OECD's Programme for International Student

DEBATE

McEFA?

John Daniel's editorial in *Education Today* No. 3 (October-December 2002) provoked reactions from several civil society representatives concerned about UNESCO's vision of the Education for All initiative. Referring in his Editorial to the success of McDonald's management model, Mr. Daniel calls for greater commoditization of learning material. Extracts from these reactions and Mr Daniel's reply are reproduced here.

Join the full dialogue at www.swaraj.org/shikshantar/mceducationforall.htm and read John Daniel's editorial on http://portal.unesco.org/education/higher_edito

"Mr. Daniel's call falls under the category of fundamentalism at a level which is deeper and, thus, more dangerous than what is usually referred to in common discourse. Believing that something is good for all people, and that someone at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology knows it and someone at UNESCO can impose it, is fundamentalism par excellence..."

Munir Fasheh, Arab Education Forum, the Palestinian Territories

"The problem is that McDonaldization of education represents a lack of faith in each and every human being's capacities to decide upon and create their own learning communities, and assumes they cannot learn without a pre-determined set of institutionalized options forced upon them. Worse yet, it holds in contempt those who do not like its homogenized options – labeling these resistors as "uneducated", "superstitious", "backward", etc."

Manish Jain and Shilpa Jain, Shikshantar, India

"Mr. Daniel's views run in concert with countless elites in governmental and non-governmental circles, who undemocratically make global development policy, which is dictatorial. The result is that the Global South, with its servitude-style McDonalzed education, is yet to stay subservient to the Global North, while the latter cooks up yet more altruistic schemes that keep the former in its dependent position."

Lisa Aubrey, Ohio University, Ghana and United States

"The one-size-fits-all hamburger has reached the point of diminishing returns. Attempts to 'personalize' the burger have finally stopped fooling people. No matter how you dress it up, you're eating a hamburger, not exercising personal freedom."

Patrick Farenga, Holt Associates, United States

"If Mr. Daniel equates education (or education material) with tools such as computers and cell phones, he may be excused as a product of some worldview that explains education as a tool. However, we in India believe that learning shapes a person – that it is not a "tradable" commodity but a "creative process".

Ram Subramaniam, Samanvaya, India



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OCTOBER

29 Sept. - 17 Oct.
32nd Session of UNESCO's General Conference
www.unesco.org/confgen

3-4
Ministerial Roundtable on the Quality of Education
 Organized by UNESCO Paris • Paris, France
 Contact: mj.pigozzi@unesco.org

5
World Teachers' Day
 Contact: r.halperin@unesco.org

9-10
UNESCO Forum on Higher Education, Research and Knowledge
 Organized by UNESCO and the International Council for Sciences • Paris, France
 Contact: k.pohjolainen@unesco.org

21-23
The Role of Education Ministries in the Government's Response to HIV/AIDS in Central Asia • Organized by UNESCO Almaty and other partners • Almaty, Kazakhstan
 Contact: a.khalafova@unesco.org

23-25
Sub-Regional EFA Conference for the Baltic Countries
 Organized by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania and the National Education Forum of Lithuania in co-operation with UNESCO • Vilnius, Lithuania
 Contact: VRVeбра@aol.com

NOVEMBER

11-12
3rd Meeting of the High-Level Group on Education for All
 Organized by UNESCO Paris • New Delhi, India
 Contact: abh.singh@unesco.org

17-21
Meeting of Directors of Education of the Pacific
 Organized by UNESCO Apia, Cook Islands National Commission and the Ministry of Education • Cook Islands
 Contact: e.tait@unesco.org

24-27
Workshop on Gender and Literacies
 Organized by UNESCO Dakar, UNICEF and the UNESCO Institute for Education • Dakar, Senegal
 Contact: c.medel-anonuevo@unesco.org

DECEMBER

6-15
Sub-regional Training Workshop on Literacy and Non-Formal Education as a means to Poverty Alleviation
 Organized UNESCO and the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education • Dhaka, Bangladesh
 Contact: a.rafique@unesco.org

8-10
International Seminar on Protecting the Rights of Street Children: Combating HIV/AIDS and Discrimination
 Organized by UNESCO/UNAIDS • Bamako, Mali
 Contact: l.saldari@unesco.org

19-21
Fifth Ministerial Review Meeting of the Nine High-Population Countries (E-9) • Organized by UNESCO • Cairo, Egypt
 Contact: m.yannarakis@unesco.org

→ Assessment (PISA) to measure how ready 15-year-olds are to face the challenges of a knowledge society. Tests were given to a sample of between 4,500 and 10,000 schoolchildren in forty-three countries.

The report also showed that spending more per pupil tended to produce better results, though not always. For example, Italy spends nearly twice as much per student than the Republic of Korea, but its results are not as good. The report links these variations to the quality of national education systems. Efficient and well-structured systems can help overcome many social and economic obstacles affecting a child's ability to learn.

Contact: **Yahhong Zhang, UNESCO Institute for Statistics** • E-mail: zhangy@exchange.umontreal.ca

RESPONSE

I am delighted by the robust correspondence generated on the Internet (a useful product of globalization) by my editorial in the issue on *Higher Education for Sale*. One of UNESCO's roles is to promote debate on key issues. I regret, however, that some contributors ignored my injunction to 'reach for our critical faculties'. Easy slogans and unwarranted generalizations do not advance the debate.

A particular irony was the correspondents who wrote from an anti-institutional perspective to attack, as being fundamentalist or undemocratic, the idea of making learning objects commodities on the web. Surely the web is a wonderful medium for increasing individual choices and bypassing institutions? Although my editorial focused on higher education some commentators extrapolated wildly to accuse me of some odd views on the global EFA campaign.

UNESCO strongly urges the decentralized management of schools. I have just returned from an inspiring visit to India where I saw how giving responsibility to the villages is driving the country rapidly towards EFA in many states. However, these village schools also want learning materials of quality, which means producing them at scale at state or national level. I call that commoditization and I am unrepentant about its virtues!

John Daniel

● **Guidelines for Education in Situations of Emergency and Crisis – EFA Strategic Planning**, edited by Kacem Bensalah. This 38-page manual, prepared to assist those elaborating national and regional EFA Plans, deals with the main actions to be implemented in emergency situations. It focuses, inter alia, on strategic planning and human resource development, education for refugees, mechanisms for allocation of resources in crisis situations, and coordination mechanisms.

● **Toolkit for Promoting Gender Equality in Education**. This toolkit aims to promote the EFA goal of gender parity by 2005 and gender equality by 2015 in Asia. It is the outcome of national and regional workshops in the context of the Gender in Education Network in Asia (GENIA). It is intended to help Education Ministries mainstream gender in education policies. Among the tools it contains are “gender lenses” for analysing curriculum and textbooks, gender responsiveness of Education Ministry Departments and for measuring child-friendliness of schools. Available from UNESCO Bangkok (gender@unesco.org)

● **HIV/AIDS and Education – A Strategic Approach**. Published by UNESCO’s International Institute for Educational Planning, this paper presents an overview of the relationship between HIV/AIDS and the education sector. It examines the use of educational settings to promote understanding and behaviour to limit the risk of infection. It also sets forth policy questions and priorities that every policy-maker faces in formulating concrete actions for success. <http://portal.unesco.org/aids/iatt-education>

● **Situation Analysis of Education in Iraq 2003**. Once the best in the Arab world, Iraq’s education system has been debilitated by a decade of sanctions, war and looting. This analysis gives an overview of the Iraqi education system and the major issues confronting it. It proposes urgent action to mobilize support for its reconstruction and renewal. This document was prepared prior to the March 2003 conflict.

● **Jeunes et Formation Alternatives**. Published by UNESCO Haiti and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, this document presents and analyses data and successful experiences in providing alternative education to Haitian youth, in particular those living in difficult circumstances. E-mail: B.Hadjadj@unesco.org

● **Developing Learning Communities – a case study**. This document critically examines the meaning of education and learning in selected villages in India. It questions the capacity of formal schooling to cater to these varied learning needs and proposes a methodology aimed at finding, supporting and promoting a pluralistic understanding of education. Published by UNESCO and Aide et Action. (ED-2003/WS/17)

● **Literacy, A UNESCO Perspective**. The U.N. Literacy Decade (2003-2012) aims at tackling the challenge of giving the more than 800 million illiterate adults access to literacy. This brochure presents UNESCO’s perspective on literacy at the start of the Decade, tracing the lines of international commitment, how the concept of literacy has developed and how it is linked to social development.

● **Education, Work and the Future**. This CD-Rom is a digital library of selected UNESCO documents in Technical and Vocational Education and Training. This improved second version contains more than 14 000 pages, covering a wide range of issues. The first edition was published in 2001.

● **Annual Meeting of the Collective Consultation of NGOs on EFA 2003**. This General Report and Recommendations for Joint Action present the outcomes of the annual meeting of the CCNGO/EFA Network held in Porto Alegre, 19-23 January 2003 in conjunction with the World Social Forum. The meeting focused on promoting linkages between quality education, civil society participation and alternative globalization.

New Education for All Advocacy Pack

This EFA Pack, contains a 6-minute video, a poster on the six Education-for-All goals, plus postcards and stickers. The materials exist in English, French and Spanish and the video is in PAL, SECAM and NTSC.



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