Asia-Pacific Regional Strategy on Using ICT to Facilitate the Achievement of Education 2030

Asia-Pacific Ministerial Forum on ICT in Education 2017
11-12 May 2017, Seoul, Republic of Korea

PREAMBLE

1. We, Ministers, high-level government officials, representatives of key stakeholders and experts, responsible for and working in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in Education from Asia-Pacific UNESCO Member States, met at the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Forum on ICT in Education 2017 (AMFIE 2017) in Seoul on 11-12 May 2017, co-organized by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea and the UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education.

2. Under the AMFIE 2017 theme of "*Shaping Up ICT-supported Lifelong Learning for All*", the Asia-Pacific Regional Strategy on Using ICT to Facilitate the Achievement of Education 2030 (Regional Strategy) was discussed and regional, sub-regional, and country-level actions were formulated to leverage the full potential of ICT in line with SDG4, Education 2030 and the Qingdao Declaration.[1]

3. Since 2000, Member States have made significant progress in integrating ICT into education under the Education for All (EFA) agenda. In view of SDG4-Education 2030, it is imperative to revisit and redefine the role of ICT in order to realize the vision of this new agenda. We recognize that the remarkable advances in ICT must be harnessed to transform educational systems and to make learning ubiquitous in the era of lifelong learning. Taking into account the diverse contexts of Asia-Pacific Member States, we commit to ensuring that ICT is harnessed to narrow the persistent learning divides in this region by expanding affordable access to equitable, inclusive, and quality learning opportunities through formal, non-formal and informal education alike.

4. We recognize that the transformation of learning through ICT aims to shift the culture of learning towards knowledge creation and being learner-centered, by means of enhancing pedagogy and promoting active learning. Through multi-sectoral engagement, public-private partnerships, and a coherent whole-of-government approach, we seek to ensure that the resources and learning environments necessary to thrive in today's digital world are available to all. We reaffirm that teachers and learners alike must be empowered to be digital citizens who use ICT not only effectively, but also safely and responsibly.

5. In consideration of the above, we endorse this Regional Strategy that details priority areas for the integration of ICT in Education as well as action points for stakeholders at all levels.

FOUR PRIORITY AREAS FOR 2017-2022

6. We agree that for the next five years (2017-2022), we will strive to create an enabling environment for ICT in Education as well as collaborate to achieve progress in the following four priority areas:
    1) Secondary Education, Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and Higher Education;
    2) Quality of Teaching and Teaching Practices;
    3) Inclusion and Equality; and
    4) Monitoring & Evaluation.

[1] UNESCO. (2015). *Qingdao Declaration, International Conference on ICT and Post-2015 Education*. Qingdao, People's Republic of China. Retrieved from: http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002333/233352E.pdf.

ICT FOR EXPANDING RELEVANT SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN SECONDARY EDUCATION, TVET AND HIGHER EDUCATION (SDG 4.1, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5)

7. We recognize that the shift toward digital economies demands a rethink of education systems to ensure quality and relevant skills development throughout life. Considering the region's rising youth unemployment levels, the need to improve the quality of and expand access to secondary education and TVET, with consideration towards higher education, has never been greater. Quality and accessible secondary education and TVET will promote a smoother transition to higher learning pathways, which include the higher education opportunities that have expanded beyond institutional confines and national boundaries through ICT. We stress then that inclusive, equitable and quality secondary education, TVET and higher education in formal, non-formal and informal sectors should be a high priority at the regional, sub-regional and national-levels.

8. We recognize that ICT-based solutions enable the provision of alternative, open and flexible pathways to secondary education, TVET, and higher education, allowing learning to take place anytime, anywhere. The open education movement, such as Open Education Resources (OERs) and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), can play a critical role in supporting affordable, on-demand and lifelong skills development to prepare learners for the rapidly changing world of work. ICT tools can facilitate, participatory, learner-centered approaches that foster transversal skills for communication, collaboration and problem-solving. ICT should also be used to strengthen partnerships between industries and TVET institutes to ensure learning stays relevant to labour markets' needs.

ICT FOR IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND TEACHING PRACTICES (SDG 4.c)

9. We highlight that the quality of an education system depends upon the quality of its teachers. Teachers play a critical role in supporting learners to face challenges and seize opportunities in the digital world. We recognize Member States' efforts to address this persistent concern.

10. We reaffirm that ICT can provide all teachers, including women teachers, with flexible learning opportunities for their professional development from pre-service education to in-service training. Distance and blended learning platforms at the national and regional levels can be used to train teachers and support their continuous professional development. We reiterate that the development of teachers' ICT competencies should focus on transformative approaches to pedagogy enhancement.

ICT FOR ENABLING INCLUSION AND EQUALITY IN EDUCATION (SDG 4.5)

11. We reaffirm that ICT is a catalyst to ensure inclusive, equitable and quality learning opportunities for all, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, those with special needs, disabilities, those in rural areas, women and girls, nomads as well as indigenous peoples. We support user-oriented ICT solutions to increase disadvantaged groups' access to quality education and skills development, while ensuring gender-responsive policies to address gender disparity in ICT-supported learning.

12. Open learning environments and well-considered resource deployment are essential to reduce the widening disparity in the quality of education between rural and urban areas, diverse socio-economic groups and disadvantaged groups. Using ICT, such as mobile technology and OERs, it is increasingly possible to improve access to and equality of educational opportunities for all.

ICT FOR MONITORING AND EVALUATION

13. Data-driven monitoring and evaluation is critical for guiding, planning, and assessing policy actions

towards SDG4-Education 2030 and provides the evidence-base for sharing best practices. We acknowledge the importance of establishing a comprehensive Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) and strengthening existing EMIS to facilitate the collection, organization and analysis of data for monitoring SDG4 indicators, especially in the Four Priority Areas. A comprehensive EMIS that leverages on the potential of new technologies, such as cloud computing and big data, will enable improved evidence-based decisions on education policies, particularly focusing on school management, school performance, and student learning outcomes.

14. In addition to the Four Priority Areas, we call for including the ICT-related SDG4 indicators into national EMIS, namely SDG4.4.1, proportion of youth and adults with ICT skills and SDG4.a.1 proportion of schools with access to the Internet, as well as proportion of schools with access to computers for pedagogical use.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES FOR 2017-2022

15. The Four Priority Areas set the immediate focus for action at the national, sub-regional and regional levels. We recognize that ICT offers two parallel and interrelated approaches: (i) as a catalyst to transform learning ecosystems to become more learner-centered, collaborative, and participatory, and (ii) as an innovative and flexible tool to enhance access to and equality in educational opportunities.

16. Moving forward, we call for the following action points to achieve progress in the Four Priority Areas in close alignment with SDG4-Education 2030. We call for UNESCO's continued support and commitment to Member States in the following action points:

    i. Member States to develop ICT in Education policies that are an integral part of sector-wide national education plans and aligned with the national ICT strategy.

    ii. Member States to engage in cooperation and partnerships across the Four Priority Areas, with the support of sub-regional and international organizations, to set up platforms for localized educational solutions, initiate research, and share good practices from the progress and lessons learned on common challenges.

    iii. On Secondary Education, TVET and Higher Education, Member States to allocate resources to maximize the full potential of ICT tools to expand flexible access to and enhance the quality and relevance of secondary education, TVET and higher education in formal, non-formal and informal sectors.

    iv. On the Quality of Teaching and Teaching Practices, Member States to develop competency standards for teachers towards ICT-integrated transformative pedagogies, and establish learning spaces and communities of practices to support teachers and share innovations.

    v. On Inclusion & Equality in Education, Member States to take explicit and concrete measures in their national ICT in Education policies to tackle the learning divide, unleashing the potential of assistive technology, mobile technology, OERs, open and distance learning platforms.

    vi. On Monitoring & Evaluation, Member States, in coordination with the SDG4-National Coordinators, to closely monitor progress of the Four Priority Areas using the potential of new technologies, such as mobile technology, cloud computing and big data, and to develop SDG4-targeted EMIS.