CONCEPT NOTE

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

Organized by
UNESCO
Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China
National Commission for UNESCO of the People’s Republic of China

Hosted by
The Municipal Government of Qingdao

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UN Women
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2015-2030: A journey towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning
CONCEPT NOTE

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BACKGROUND

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have transformed many aspects of our lives and offered unprecedented opportunities and challenges for education. Education institutions, at all levels, need to provide every citizen with the knowledge, skills and competences as well as the lifelong learning opportunities required for living and working in an increasingly technology-rich environment. Education systems should also ensure that they are able to make use of the potential benefits of ICT to expand access to and enhance the quality and relevance of learning throughout life. To this effect, education management as well as the teaching and learning process should be reshaped towards the needs of individual fulfilment and sustainable development of knowledge economies.

The recent acceleration of technological change, including Internet developments, mobile technologies, cloud computing and the rise of open education resources - to cite just a few examples - result in renewed, even stronger interest in their potential to solve the existing problems and shape future education. This is in conjunction with the global consultation on shaping the post-2015 education agenda, coordinated by UNESCO.

The post-2015 education agenda to be discussed with Member States in the World Education Forum 2015 will underscore the importance of a broad and lifelong learning perspective. The proposed goals aim at empowering people to fulfil their right to quality education and their personal expectations for life and work, and thus to contribute to their societies’ socio-economic development. In such a vision, making access to digital devices and broadband universal is an essential step towards achieving “equitable, quality education and lifelong learning for all by 2030”, and ensuring “that all young people and adults have equitable opportunities to access and complete formal and non-formal technical and vocational education and training relevant to the world of work as well as lifelong learning opportunities that enable learners to acquire diverse and relevant knowledge and skills that foster their professional and personal development”.1

To unleash the potentials of ICT in underpinning the achievement of post-2015 education targets, policy makers need to understand ICT’s role in delivering equitable and quality lifelong learning opportunities, and the sector-wide strategies of integrating ICT in the post-2015 education agenda need to be informed by debates between education and ICT sectors. It is in this context that UNESCO, with the support of the Government of the People’s Republic of China, the Municipal Government of Qingdao and the Wei Dong Group of China, is organizing the International Conference on ICT and Post-2015 Education from 23 to 25 May 2015 in Qingdao, China.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Conference seeks to create an interface between education and ICT sectors to debate on how ICT can be leveraged at scale to support the achievement of post-2015 education targets. The Conference outputs will include a declaration to provide Member States with policy recommendations on how to harness the power of ICT to address current educational challenges and to ensure equitable quality education and lifelong opportunities for all, and develop follow-up action plans and relevant partnerships that aim to help Member States to develop system-wide ICT in education strategies in the context of shaping the national post-2015 sustainable development agenda.

The objectives of the Conference are to:

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(1) convene intersectoral discussion to define the role and value of ICTs in the post-2015 education agenda;

(2) take stock of sector-wide strategies to leverage ICT to ensure equitable and quality lifelong opportunities for all;

(3) develop follow-up action plans and reinforce partnerships.

TARGET COUNTRIES AND PARTICIPANTS

(1) Ministers of Education

A significant number of ministers of education from all regions are expected to join the Conference. Ministers from the countries where effective strategies for ICT in education are being implemented and education leaders who have demonstrated vision in leveraging ICT for education development will be invited to join the high-level debate with ICT industry leaders. The ministers are also expected to discuss and adopt the Qingdao Declaration that will be a key output of the Conference.

(2) ICT industry leaders

Leaders of international ICT companies that have created promising ICT solutions to education development or have evidence-based insights into ICT trends and their implications for the future of learning will be invited to join the discussions.

(3) Experts

To maximize the spectrum of experience and knowledge to be shared during the Conference, experts who have conducted rigorous studies, developed innovative ICT solutions for education or implemented effective large-scale projects will be invited to join the plenary and breakout sessions.

(4) Policy-makers and practitioners

Ministry officials, representatives of other United Nations agencies, intergovernmental organizations, ICT companies, and NGOs will be invited too.

(5) Chinese participants

Ministry officials, researchers, representatives of schools and education institutions of China will be invited to the Conference.

THEME AND SUB-THEMES

Under the core theme of leveraging ICT to support the achievement of post-2015 education targets, forward-looking debates, sharing of cutting-edge knowledge and ICT solutions and deliberation on sector strategies will be organized around the following sub-themes:

1. Education and ICT Leaders Debate: Scenarios and enablers of ICT-enhanced future education

This session is to convene forward-looking debate between education and ICT industry leaders on how ICT trends will potentially reshape key aspects of the education system and how policy enablers and ICT innovations should be intertwined in national and institutional policies in order to achieve post-2015 education targets. The debate will act as the overarching architecture to frame the follow-up thematic discussion and knowledge sharing. While forward-looking views are encouraged, the foresight should be anchored in questions on ICT’s role in ensuring the equality and quality of education.

   – Envisioning digital learning in 2030: Conceiving scenarios of the ICT-enhanced equitable and quality education system and multiple lifelong learning pathways by 2030.
2. **Effective use of ICT for quality learning**

This session aims to share effective policies and innovative practices on how national, institutional and school strategies should be aligned to provide system-wide support for teachers’ effective pedagogical use of ICT, therefore to optimize the benefits of ICT for the quality of learning. Specific issues to be addressed under this sub-theme include:

- **Transforming teacher education programmes**: How should teachers’ ICT competencies be defined and developed to ensure effective pedagogical use of ICT? How should teacher training institutions be empowered to use ICT to expand the benefits of training programmes? How should teacher innovation be incentivized and recognized?

- **Transforming schools to create open learning environments**: How should schools and learning environments be reinvented to take advantage of the ubiquity and mobility of ICT to ensure that all girls and boys achieve minimum proficiency standards relevant to their age group/grade?

- **Transforming learning to mainstream innovative pedagogies**: What new ways of teaching, learning and assessment have been proved as attributors to better learning performance? How to incentivize and recognize teacher innovation in using ICT?

3. **ICT-enhanced inclusive and relevant lifelong learning**

This session will deliberate on how innovative ICT solutions can be successfully brought to scale in order to bridge the knowledge divide and build multiple lifelong learning pathways that span formal and informal systems and support job-related skill development. Specific issues to be addressed under this sub-theme include:

- **Advancing equity in education through ICT**: How can the combination of mobile technologies, cloud solutions and localized content be leveraged to enhance the quality of literacy programmes? How can ICT be used to diversify learning pathways, improve quality, and further reach vulnerable and underserved groups?

- **Building multiple lifelong learning pathways**: How is ICT best utilized to build multiple lifelong learning pathways that span formal and informal systems and support personalized learning and job-related skill development?

- **Empowering women and girls**: What gender-sensitive approaches to the application and use of ICT in education should be developed? How can the potential of ICT be unleashed to bridge the access, knowledge and confidence gaps between males and females?

4. **Universal access to quality content**

This session aims to identify the key institutional strategies to foster the development and sharing of high-quality digital content, promote open educational resources (OER) and unleash the potential of online learning to foster knowledge creation. Specific issues to be addressed under this sub-theme include:

- **Creating and sharing content - OER and digital textbooks**: How are open licensing, cloud storage and mobile devices re-shaping textbooks and enhancing learning content? What strategies are effective to ensure the quality of large-scale user-generated OER? What strategies best incentivize teachers and students to create and share high-quality resources?
Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and other online learning innovations: How should well-organized online learning courses, including MOOCs, be leveraged to build new learning pathways for university students and other groups of learners?

Recognition of online learning: How to respond to the challenges linked to quality assurance, pedagogical effectiveness and certification of online courses? How can the design and organization of online courses be optimized by big data and learning analytics?

5. Monitoring and evaluation of the impacts of ICT on post-2015 education

This session aims to examine the indicators and methodologies that can be used to monitor the impacts of ICT on the achievement of post-2015 education targets. The following questions will be discussed:

- **How to measure ICT’s contribution to equality in education**: When developing country-level targets and indicators for inclusive access to education, how should access to well-organized online courses be reflected?

- **How to measure ICT-related skills as emerging learning outcomes**: When developing country-level targets and indicators for the quality of education and lifelong learning, how should ICT-related skills be integrated?

- **How to monitor the long-lasting impacts of ICT on large-scale learning processes and learning outcomes?**

**EXHIBITIONS AND STUDY VISITS**

Exhibitions will be held to demonstrate ICT innovations for education. Study visits will be organized so that participants can observe innovative practices of ICT integration in local schools and institutions.