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Effective Use of ICT for Education

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Introduction:

In some contexts, ICT has also become integral to the teaching-learning interaction, through such approaches as replacing chalkboards with interactive digital whiteboards, using students' own smart phones or other devices for learning during class time, and the "flipped classroom" model where students watch lectures at home on the computer and use classroom time for more interactive exercises.

When teachers are digitally literate and trained to use ICT, these approaches can lead to higher order thinking skills, provide creative and individualized options for students to express their understandings, and leave students better prepared to deal with ongoing technological change in society and the workplace. ICT issues planners must consider include: considering the total cost-benefit equation, supplying and maintaining the requisite infrastructure, and ensuring investments are matched with teacher support and other policies aimed at effective ICT use.

According to Daniels (2002) ICTs have become within a very short time, one of the basic building blocks of modern society. Many countries now regard understanding ICT and mastering the basic skills and concepts of ICT as part of the core of education, alongside reading, writing and numeracy. However, there appears to be a misconception that ICTs generally refers to 'computers and computing related activities'. This is fortunately not the case, although computers and their application play a significant role in modern information management, other technologies and/or systems also comprise of the phenomenon that is commonly regarded as ICTs. Pelgrum and Law (2003) state that near the end of the 1980s, the term 'computers' was replaced by 'IT' (information technology) signifying a shift of focus from computing technology to the capacity to store and retrieve information. This was followed by the introduction of the term 'ICT' (information and

communication technology) around 1992, when e-mail started to become available to the general public (Pelgrum, W.J., Law, N., 2003). According to a United Nations report (1999) ICTs cover Internet service provision, telecommunications equipment and services, information technology equipment and services, media and broadcasting, libraries and documentation centers, commercial information providers, network-based information services, 2 and other related information and communication activities. According to UNESCO (2002) information and communication technology (ICT) may be regarded as the combination of 'Informatics technology' with other related technology, specifically communication technology.

The various kinds of ICT products available and having relevance to education, such as teleconferencing, email, audio conferencing, television lessons, radio broadcasts, interactive radio counselling, interactive voice response system, audiocassettes and CD ROMS etc have been used in education for different purposes (Sharma, 2003; Sanyal, 2001; Bhattacharya and Sharma, 2007).

Objectives:

This paper's scope is to propose one possible set of objectives that could realize above defined aim.

For each objective a set of applications, change drivers, requirements and possible leaders will be identified. Education processes differ among themselves because of the subject of learning, required learning Outcomes, previous knowledge, learning styles, culture, industry and many other factors. On the other hand, ICT can be used in a variety of ways in any traditional or new activity.

These two factors combined derive numerous activities in educational process in which ICT is or can be implemented. In order to streamline them and to try to identify some common points and shared resources, it is proposed to group them in three sets of objectives:

1. Learning assistance: assistance and support for learning and teaching.
2. New learning: new teaching and learning methods, techniques and tools.

Uses in Teaching and Learning:

Information Communication Technology (ICT) tools contribute to high quality lessons since they have potential to increase students' motivation, connect students to many information sources, support active in-class and out-class learning environments, and let instructors to allocate more time for facilitation. Therefore, use of ICT tools in teaching and learning process becomes a great area of research for many educators. These technologies increase students' motivation, self-confidence and self-esteem to learn. Additionally, new technologies usually encourage independent and active learning, as a result, the students feel more responsible for their own learning. Considerable number of research on the contribution of ICT in modernizing learning and teaching, triggers attempt to incorporate these technologies in order to benefit in terms of quality of education, flexibility, access, and its cost.

Take a holistic approach towards the development of ICT in education plans and policies. This includes support for ICT at both the national and individual school level. This includes measures such as involving education stakeholders in how to integrate ICT skills in the curriculum, or tap teachers to help develop policy plans.

Build the capacity of teachers, administrators and other education leaders to use and integrate ICT in education systems. Education leaders should be provided with professional development opportunities so they can engage teachers and together demonstrate a shared commitment to ICT in education.

Share best practices and lessons learned among countries in Asia, and among schools within the country. This accumulated knowledge can then be used to inform the development of blueprints and tools to better support ICT in education practices.

Forge public-private partnerships (PPPs) and collaboration with tertiary institutions to bring in additional technical and management expertise, as well as financial resources. 'Education PPPs' combine the strengths and capabilities of both sides to ensure the sustainability and scalability of ICT in education initiatives. Governments should drive and facilitate partnerships that include attracting private sector investments on a sustained basis, and tap upon the expertise and resources of both private sector and tertiary institutions, with an emphasis on equal access to quality, ICT-enabled education.

Mobilize resources for research and evaluation of ICT in education to spur innovation and scale up its use. This includes working with tertiary institutions to act as research centers. Governments can create incentives for R&D on innovative uses of ICT in education, including for instance making software and hardware more affordable and relevant for students. Rigorous evaluation studies on ICT effectiveness can provide evidence-based justification for transforming the education sector to embrace ICT.

ICT provides countries in Asia and the Pacific the opportunity to transform teaching, learning, and management practices in schools. The need for this transformation is urgent, given the increasingly globalized world in which students and teachers now live. Without it, as future graduates they could end up as part of a workforce that cannot keep up with the demands of the 21st century.

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