

**Regional Seminar on
the Impact of the Economic Crisis on Higher Education and
the Use of ICT in Universities in Asia and the Pacific**

**Queen's Park Imperial Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand
30 June – 2 July 2010**

*Co-organized by
UNESCO Asia and the Pacific Regional Bureau for Education
Commission of Higher Education, Thailand*

Information Note

As proclaimed in the Communiqué adopted by the participants of World Conference on Higher Education in July 2009, “At no time in history has it been more important to invest in higher education as a major force in building an inclusive and diverse knowledge society and to advance research, innovation and creativity”. The global economy is fast becoming a knowledge-based economy, and higher education is increasingly seen as central to hasten the pace of growth and to maintain the competitiveness of the economy. That is why most governments endeavor to develop and upgrade their higher education system constantly.

Since its creation in 1945, UNESCO has worked to improve education worldwide believing it to be a key to social and economic development as well. As a specialized agency of United Nations, one of UNESCO's functions is to anticipate and respond to emerging trends and needs in education and develop education policy recommendations based on research evidence. UNESCO also strives to promote development and implementation of successful educational practices and document and disseminate successful practices.

To this end and within the framework of higher education programmes, UNESCO Asia and the Pacific Regional Bureau for Education based in Bangkok, Thailand has launched two research studies in 2009 based on the requests from the member states in the region. Two thematic issues include the following:

Theme 1: The use of ICT in universities in Asia and the Pacific

Rapid developments in information and communication technologies (ICT) have changed the way we access and share information and in how we communicate with one another. Recognizing that ICT can enhance the reach and quality of education, and improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the delivery of educational objectives, universities have increasingly relied on ICT for developing course materials; augmenting their teaching, learning and research practices; and planning and implementing their administration and management services.

Given this context, UNESCO Bangkok has initiated a project to facilitate effective policy making and the adaptation of innovative ICT practices in universities and to provide useful information for policy makers, university leaders and teaching staff to adopt and adapt these innovations in their country and institutions. Seven countries in the region are participating: Australia, China, China- Hong Kong, India, Republic of Korea, Singapore and Thailand.

Theme 2: The impact of the economic crisis on higher education

The environment of higher education was getting into turmoil created by the financial crisis which struck most of the countries in the Asia-Pacific region. The priorities of most governments seemed to be safeguarding the banking and financial systems, providing tax cuts to businesses, increasing expenditures for infrastructure and creating jobs, while measures for social sectors, such as education, take a backseat. Although the rhetoric supports the importance of education in contributing to national wealth, education spending is seen by many policy makers as consumption. It was a customary target for budget cuts in national spending and in aid to education when confronted by a financial crunch, as supported by evidence from past crises.

The research study was initiated to provide an in-depth analysis of the impact of the crisis on higher education and to produce policy recommendations to guide the member states not to stop the development of higher education during the crisis period. 11 countries in the region were invited to the consultation meeting and decided to conduct the research study on their country case, which include Australia, China, China-Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Republic of Korea, and Thailand.

Objectives of the seminar

To share and examine the findings of the case studies on the use of ICT and the research on the impact of the economic crisis on higher education, UNESCO Bangkok is organizing a regional seminar for the following objectives:

- Present the findings of the case studies/research;
- Seek responses to the findings from policy makers, researchers and stakeholders on how to address the issues; and
- Discuss the implications of these studies for policy, planning and management of higher education in the respective countries.

Expected outcomes

- Case studies on the use of ICT in universities presented;
- Major impact of the economic crisis on higher education in Asia and the Pacific identified and examined;
- Recommendation based on the results of the research studies;
- Potential action plans and follow-up activities identified; and
- Publications based on the papers presented at the seminar.

Potentail participants

- Higher education institution administrators, academicians and researchers
- Policy makers and government officials
- Representatives from international organizations and educational institutions

Venue

Queen's Park Imperial Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand

Dates

30 June – 2 July 2010

Provisional programme

Wednesday, 30 June	Opening and welcome Session I: The use of ICT in universities
Thursday, 1 July	Session I (cont'd) Plenary discussion on the use of ICT in universities Session II: The impact of the economic crisis on higher education
Friday, 2 July	Session II (cont'd) Plenary discussion on the impact of the economic crisis on higher education Closing

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