



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Applying ICT to Transform Education

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation is the UN agency responsible for the promotion of international cooperation in the fields of education, science, culture and communication. UNESCO functions as a laboratory of ideas and standard setter to forge universal agreements on emerging development and ethical issues. It also serves as a clearinghouse for the dissemination and sharing of information and knowledge, while helping member states to build their human and institutional capacities.

In November 2004, Koïchiro Matsuura, Director General of UNESCO, and Bill Gates, Microsoft Chairman, signed a global cooperation agreement on behalf of UNESCO and Microsoft. The partnership focuses on assessing how information and communications technologies (ICTs) can be used positively to reduce poverty and seeks to develop joint programmes to address the digital divide and enrich educational curricula.

At Microsoft we believe that contributing to partnerships for development is a core part of corporate citizenship and integral to conducting responsible business. Our approach is competence-based and rooted in the idea that by bringing the core values and resources of the company and its employees to the table, we can support our partners serving local needs and addressing local challenges.

The goals outlined in the agreement with UNESCO are executed in partnership with other government, civil society and private partners in support of the common goals of promoting socio-economic development and an equitable knowledge society around the world. Microsoft is collaborating in three of UNESCO's four core pillars: education, culture, as well as communication and information.

Joint programmes seek to:

- Develop universal benchmarks for teacher training on the integration of ICTs in the classroom
- Create teacher networks for the exchange of teaching best practices, pedagogic learning methods and content material
- Distribute self-learning modules for first time computer users (Unlimited Potential and Digital Literacy curricula)

Innovative Teachers Programme

UNESCO and Microsoft have cooperated in bringing the Innovative Teachers programme and its online community, the Innovative Teachers Network (ITN), to the Asia-Pacific region, Middle-East and Europe. As part of the programme, UNESCO, local educational authorities and Microsoft are developing projects for the inclusion of information technologies in teachers' training, in partnership with teachers' colleges, pedagogical institutes, and schools of education through the Next Generation of Teachers (NET) initiative.

“We recognise the importance of harnessing ICT to help improve sustainable livelihoods in underserved communities. By working with global business leaders such as Microsoft that support our efforts to establish open and inclusive knowledge societies, we can accelerate the creation of social change and the expansion of economic opportunities throughout the developing world.”

Koïchiro Matsuura,
Director General of UNESCO





“We are honoured to partner with UNESCO. Our shared goal is to help remove barriers to digital inclusion and enable people around the world to realize the full potential of technology – through education and skills development programmes, community access, and the preservation of cultural and language diversity. Technology is a crucial resource in today’s world, but remains beyond the reach of millions of people. We hope to play a part in changing that”

Bill Gates, Microsoft Chairman

Commenting on the Innovative Teachers Forum, Sheldon Shaeffer, Director of UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, said: “ICTs bring huge hope and empowerment for the people of the developing as well as the developed world. Our partnership with Microsoft is an excellent example of how the public and private sectors can powerfully combine to help address major issues like literacy and poverty affecting entire communities, societies and countries.”

The priorities of the ITF programme include creating a platform for the advancement of best practice and adoption of innovation, providing training and access to technology resources, engaging with teachers and delivering integration confidence to use technology in the learning process.

As a key part of the programme, regional Innovative Teachers Forums (ITF) and Awards are held regularly in different countries, which in the past years have included Estonia, Egypt, Singapore, Korea, Cambodia and France. The Forums bring together teachers from the region – selected through national competitions – to share best practices and build a global network. An awards ceremony also rewards individuals for innovative teaching through ICT.

“The launch of the Innovative Teachers Network-Arabia in Egypt on April 2006 has been a major milestone for thousands of teachers who are now sharing best practices and self-authored lessons, in Arabic, over this excellent online platform” said Tarek Shawki, Chief of the Section for ICT in Education, Science and Culture in UNESCO.

More than 180 leading teachers from 18 countries attended the ITF in Cambodia in February 2007. In March 2007, 200 participants, including 150 teachers from 40 countries in Europe, the Middle East and Africa, met at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris for the largest Teachers Forum yet. More recently, in April 2008, the Regional Innovative Teachers’ Forum held in Vietnam in cooperation with the Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training, welcomed more than 200 teachers, leaders, government officials, and academics. Teachers representing 17 countries were chosen from more than 50,000 entries and from more than 10,000 schools. The Forum was opened by the Standing Vice Minister of the Ministry of Education.

Millennium Development Goal
**Progress in Basic Education
in Sub-Saharan Africa**

Primary School Completion Rate

1990

50%

2005

58%



UNESCO ICT Teacher Competency Standards

Microsoft, along with industry partners Intel and CISCO, and the International Society for Teacher Education (ISTE), have worked closely with UNESCO to develop the UNESCO 'ICT Teacher Competency Standards', a resource providing guidance on quality teacher training and how to best use ICT in the classroom. The standards aim to improve the way teachers teach – resulting in better education and more highly skilled students to advance a countries economic and social development.

The initiative applies for the first time clear criteria and standards for the application of ICT in the classroom, regardless of where the classroom is located. It provides a basic set of instructions that allow teachers to integrate ICT into their teaching, to improve student learning, and to further utilise technology in the learning experience.

The first phase of the CST project was completed in late 2007 and the Competency Standards for Teachers – presented in a set of three booklets - were launched in January 2008. The Standards provide a syllabus as the key reference for training providers, listing guidelines on what teachers should know to apply ICT to education in their own creative ways and examples of how to train them to achieve this.

While the Competency Standards for Teachers specify the competencies needed to bring ICT into education, it remains up to approved governmental, non-governmental, and private providers to deliver the curriculum and training programmes for these competencies. Microsoft's Unlimited Potential, Digital Literacy and Partners in Learning curricula, represent some of today's teacher training options, which are consistent with the emerging standards.

Millennium Development Goal
Progress in Basic Education
in Sub-Saharan Africa

Literacy Rate, 15-24yr olds

1990

69%

2005

73%



Imagine Cup

UNESCO has been an official endorser of the Microsoft Imagine Cup competition for 2007 and 2008. Imagine Cup is a global competition that challenges students to contribute directly to the future of technology, software and computing and imagine a better world enabled by their own talent. Each year teams develop innovative technological and artistic projects aligned to a social cause.

In 2007, the competition's theme was on imagining "a world where technology enables a better education for all" and 344 students from 59 countries took part. UNESCO was the official endorser and sponsor of the global finals held Korea. Winning teams came from Thailand, Korea and Jamaica and were selected for their projects to help kindergarten children learn to read and write, support deaf and blind people learn, and to facilitate long-distance education.

UNESCO is also endorsing the 2008 Imagine Cup, focused on using technology to "enable a sustainable environment". The finals in August 2008 will be hosted at UNESCO's headquarters in Paris. The organisation's environmental experts will also participate as judges in the selection of winners.

Regional Training Workshops

In October 2007, Microsoft and UNESCO jointly organised a regional workshop in China focused on ICT-integration in education. The workshop was part of Microsoft's Next Generation of Teachers project and will provide an opportunity for teacher educators in Asia to discuss issues relating to bringing ICT into teacher education. The aim is to train teacher educators to act as coaches for their colleagues.

Through this project, teacher educators across the region will learn a variety of instructional approaches utilizing ICT and will gain the flexibility required to bring the benefits of ICT into classrooms and improve the quality and reach of education. The Regional Workshop on ICT-integration for the Next Generation of Teachers will be followed by another workshop, held in Brunei in May 2008, which will also offer an opportunity for teacher educators to participate in the Peer Coaching programme, sponsored by Microsoft. More than 30 Teacher Education Institutes (TEIs) from 10 countries will participate.

Following this workshop, UNESCO will convene the curriculum development workshop for curriculum developers, also to be held in 2008.

Primary School Enrolment Rate

1990

50%

2005

66%

Millennium Development Goal
Progress in Basic Education
in Sub-Saharan Africa





Country-Specific Collaboration: Brazil

The MOU between UNESCO and Microsoft is global in scope. However, a number of collaborations also take place at the country-level to further drive the application of ICT in education.

In Brazil, UNESCO's field office has been working with Microsoft Brazil to carry out an assessment of the implementation of Microsoft's national activities related to the Partners in Learning program to help train teachers to use ICT into the classroom. The assessment included identifying areas of success and impact, and areas for improvement by conducting a survey of local education and government elites.

The results report enabled Microsoft to get valuable feedback on the relevance of its education programmes locally directly from beneficiaries and teachers, and to improve delivery. The study, in turn, allowed UNESCO to better understand how different programmes are benefiting communities in Brazil and to pull out key learnings and best practices.

Community Multimedia Centres (CMCs)

Microsoft is actively supporting UNESCO in setting up Community Multimedia Centres (CMCs). CMCs allow local citizens in developing countries to produce their own multimedia content using a range of online resources and communication tools (e.g. community radio). The centres also function as vocational training hubs for awareness campaigns, with specific focus on female empowerment.

A total of 20 CMCs have already been set up in Mali, Mozambique and Senegal. The second phase of the programme will establish a national network of 50 CMCs in each country, focusing on the sustainability of each centre to ensure the financial autonomy of the project. Microsoft will increase its support to include a comprehensive digital curriculum literacy module, a certification programme, ICT training, technical support, local language applications, capacity building support and the possibility of delivering quality refurbished computers. The CMC programme is eventually hoped to progress beyond these countries and to tackle areas such as eGovernment.

Microsoft is also investigating how it can serve UNESCO's Community Multimedia Centres and other initiatives such as local teaching curriculum through its Local Language Program, designed to lower the barriers of entry for first time computer users (non-native English speakers).

ICT4Youth Initiative in North Africa

In November 2005 during the World Summit on the Information Society, UNESCO and Microsoft launched ICT4Youth – a regional technology centre for North Africa designed to provide youth access to IT and skills training. ICT4Youth Centre trainers deliver courses at more than 150 youth centres in Tunisia, reaching more than 10,000 youth at a national level. At a regional level, collaborative programmes and training are being implemented in Egypt, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Mauritania and Libya to reach thousands of young people across North Africa.

Knowledge Communities

UNESCO and Microsoft are also cooperating on an initiative to promote communities of practice (CoP). CoPs are groups of people dedicated to a common goal, who share common interests or who are simply related by the use of a particular tool. Such groups are invaluable to share knowledge, solve problems, exchange ideas, set standards, build tools, etc.

Microsoft has supported UNESCO to build web based platforms to facilitate such community related projects and to consolidate individual efforts into one platform that would serve as a common solution for building and managing all UNESCO CoPs. UNESCO has started to build the underlying infrastructure and acquired the software licenses through Microsoft SSN programme and training materials.

Microsoft designed a technical platform (including testing and staging component) to meet the requirements of high availability, performance and number of active users to host on SharePoint 2007.

In Summary

UNESCO and Microsoft, through their global strategic cooperation, are committed to finding new ways to transform education through the use of ICT ... as education is the cornerstone of social and economic opportunity, and efforts to help young people realize their full potential must begin here.

