

Main Theme: Education**The topic of panel discussion: Solutions Salon - The Intercultural Innovations in Education**

Moderator: *Jyrki Pulkkinen*, CEO of GeSCI

Introduction to the discussion topic:

School may be the only institution that has not changed dramatically after the inception of the school concept. It is worth mentioning that the concept of school dates back to a time when there were few books available and in order to learn from books, one person, usually a priest, read the book (usually a bible) and the learners sat quietly and listened. This tradition of trusting books, their guardians (such as the priest in the above example) and authors to be the ultimate source of wisdom and knowledge, and that one must passively absorb this 'wisdom' has, been followed in schools quite well. Of course the books in the beginning were mostly religious books and the idea was to transfer the dogmas from generation to generation. So, the current models for educating our youth as well as older ones have been inherited from this tradition. It is also worth mentioning that the ancient civic education was based more on the home schooling model, and the medieval vocational education was based on the scaffolding model where the master transfers his skills to a young apprentice through working together. The apprentice was recognised as a master when he was able to do as well as, or even better, than his own master. So, from all of these models the model used by priests for religious learning was adopted for the concept of schooling.

The long tradition of schooling created a strong culture of teaching and learning in schools. Everybody seems to know how things are done in schools. Now, in the advent of Knowledge Societies, we are wondering how to transform schools with the use of ICT. The R&D on ICT is producing many interesting and innovative solutions for schools, even trying to revisit the old home schooling tradition as well as apprentice model, but often with very weak results. The schooling culture seems to be intent on keeping schools operating in the same mode they have been for centuries. The only models that have been accepted broadly in schools are the PC lab model and the new intelligent white board model, where in both models the teacher-learner interaction is still based on the traditional schooling model.

On the other hand, the slowly changing education system has been useful for cultural and social re-production and conservation. If your schools are based in your own language and on your own cultural values, it is easier to preserve a culture and keep minority languages alive. Now, the global ICT networks, especially the Internet together with satellite TV puts a lot of pressure on minority cultures and languages to survive. One could even claim, that the Internet is advancing a cultural globalization, that affects the most important social and cultural institutions like education. One could say that the Internet is destroying the cultural diversity and the reproduction mechanism of the local culture. From this point of view, there have recently been lots of discussions concerning the production of local, culturally relevant ICT based learning content for schools. However, most of these initiatives have not been commercially sustainable

and in most cases, the global content has only been translated for local schools. Money seems to be the key issue in the battle for survival of the small cultures.

The broad questions and issues that arise in the education domain include:

1. How can ICT innovations transform the education system and create a school that is more in line with the current learning research rather than be based on the traditional school model where teachers speak in the front of the class and learners listen and read a text book(from the screen)? (Home schooling would mean today e-learning and apprentice model would mean collaborative learning in a learning community)
2. How we can make sure that the strong ICT utilization in education systems (especially using the globally produced standardised learning materials and content) does not work against the cultural diversity, but rather empowers the small local languages and cultures?
3. How can we make local content provision more commercially viable?

So, my questions for the discussion today are the following;

1. How can UNDESA-GAID contribute to promoting ICT innovations to transform the educational system and help developing countries to improve their services?
2. What can participating organizations and entities contribute?
3. What are the complementing components in the programmes of participating organizations that can serve as the basis for collaborating partnerships?
4. How do you think can mobile and wireless technologies and broadband for the educational sector be used more efficiently with support from participating organizations?

In light of the above, please try to answer at least some of these questions. You can make your arguments from your own perspective, and give some practical examples about how these questions have been answered in practise.