CALL FOR PROPOSALS
Hosting a Regional Consultation and Publishing a Policy Brief on ICT-driven innovation in higher education in Asia-Pacific

Type of Contract: Contract for Services
Duration of contract: 30 March – 30 August 2019
Closing date: 18 March 2019

Background

As ICT access increases, there is a growing commitment to develop high-quality Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) in Asia-Pacific. Given increased demand for quality higher education and training in the region, MOOCs and blended learning are important means to ensure equitable access to quality higher education and lifelong learning opportunities for all.\(^1\) However, there are concerns about the gap in ICT use that may cause more serious social polarisation in the future.

With generous support from the Shenzhen Funds-in-Trust, UNESCO launched a two-year project on ICT-driven innovation from 2016-2018 to explore the role of blended learning and MOOCs in improving teaching and learning and strengthening institutional governance.\(^2\) During the project, a new self-assessment framework on blended learning for quality higher education was piloted in Cambodia and Sri Lanka (see *Blended Learning for Quality Higher Education*). A second component of the project focused on the role of MOOCs in Asia-Pacific.

To consolidate lessons learned from the SFIT project UNESCO Bangkok, together with the International Centre for Higher Education Innovation under the auspices of UNESCO (ICHEI), plans to deliver a high-impact, joint policy brief on ICT-driven innovation in higher education in Asia-Pacific.

**ICT-driven innovation in higher education in Asia-Pacific**

Under the SFIT project and hosted by ICHEI, delegates and stakeholders from nearly 30 countries met in Shenzhen, China for the Asia-Pacific Regional Seminar on MOOCs for Higher Education: Seizing

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\(^1\) See UNESCO - [Leading Education 2030/ Sustainable Development Goal 4](https://www.unesco.org/en/ourwork/goals/sustainable-development-going-global)

**digital opportunities to achieve SDG4** (11-12 June 2018). As a result, UNESCO Bangkok identified two important areas of work to accelerate progress in Asia-Pacific:

1. **Launching an Asia-Pacific Network on MOOCs to achieve SDG4** – UNESCO agreed to prepare a new open network to promote information sharing and technical assistance to countries throughout the Asia-Pacific region;

2. **Developing collaborative research on innovative ICT policies and practices in Asia-Pacific** – During the regional seminar, stakeholders agreed on the need to take stock of how MOOCs are used to expand access and promote quality higher education in Asia-Pacific, including how courses are recognized and quality-assured across borders. The research scope and draft framework are based on **five levels of need**:

   a) **Policy level and quality assurance agencies**: At policy level, data-driven monitoring and evaluation is critical for guiding, planning, and assessing policies to achieve SDG4. Policymakers explored the challenges of developing and sustaining strategies on MOOCs for higher education, and how to leverage insights to promote innovation and effective governance.

   b) **MOOC platforms**: National platforms for MOOCs have spread throughout Asia and the Pacific. A network of national MOOC platforms is emerging to share lessons learned, including how to develop and localize new knowledge. National representatives shared strategies to promote local knowledge to ensure equitable access to quality higher education and training.

   c) **Institutional/training providers**: Inclusive learning environments are necessary to thrive in today’s digital world. However, traditional boundaries between learning environments at higher education institutions are being blurred by other formal, non-formal and informal education and training pathways. How expected learning outcomes are defined and assessed in the context of higher education remains an open debate, including about the relevance of MOOCs and higher education institutions as a whole. Higher education leaders shared strategies and practical experiences on how to drive institutional change to support next generation learners.

   d) **Youth and adult learners**: A truly learner-centred experience is fundamental to quality higher education. How students perceive these needs and the changing role of higher education institutions was explored (i.e. student insights on how/if learning is responsive and relevant for individual learners and society for sustainable development).

   e) **Cross-sector partnerships**: Multi-sectoral engagement, including with EdTech providers, is key to sustainability and innovation. Such partnerships must be based on strategies that cut across formal, non-formal and informal sectors at regional and
national levels. How these partnerships are managed in the context of higher education is critical for further research and development.

To consolidate lessons learned from the SFIT project (e.g. on MOOCs and blended learning), a consultative meeting and policy brief will be produce by UNESCO and ICHEI together with a host partner. Related objectives of the consultative meeting and policy brief are outlined in the following section.

Assignment

Meeting objectives

1. With support from UNESCO and drawing on the SFIT project (2016-2018), prepare a research framework on ICT-driven innovation in higher education and related SGD4 targets;
2. Convene experts and key stakeholders to peer review a draft policy brief;
3. Host a consultative meeting to finalize the policy brief and launch the Asia-Pacific Network on MOOCs to achieve SDG4, in consultation with UNESCO Bangkok.

Research approach

Under the direct supervision of the Chief of Section for Educational Innovation and Skills Development at UNESCO Bangkok, the contractor will focus on strategies to enhance the quality of teaching and learning, and strengthen institutional governance through ICT-driven innovation in Asia-Pacific.

The main components of the policy brief and consultative meeting include:

A. Draft policy brief
   - Highlight state-of-the-art technologies and examples from the public and private sectors to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in higher education in Asia-Pacific;
   - Identify strategies to strengthen institutional governance and partnerships to reach the most vulnerable learners in Asia-Pacific.

B. Host a consultative meeting on ICT-driven innovation in higher education in Asia-Pacific
   - Host consultation meeting (est. 10-12 peer reviewers) to finalize a draft policy brief;
   - Develop actionable insights and recommendations to promote outcomes from the SFIT project (e.g. on MOOCs and blended learning).

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3 See also: [Qingdao Declaration](#) International Conference on ICT and post-2015 Education: Seize digital opportunities. Lead Education transformation(23-25 May 2015, Qingdao, China)
Schedule and deliverables

The contractor shall complete the following work assignment by the indicated tentative timeline for UNESCO’s review and approval:

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<tr>
<th>Activity / Deliverable</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
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<tr>
<td>Contractual arrangements completed</td>
<td>Late March</td>
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<tr>
<td>Initial meeting with UNESCO staff (virtual or in Bangkok)</td>
<td>Late March</td>
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<tr>
<td>Submit draft research framework and timeline for the policy brief</td>
<td>15 April</td>
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<tr>
<td>Host consultative meeting for peer review and network launch</td>
<td>Early August</td>
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<tr>
<td>Submit final report and policy brief</td>
<td>30 August</td>
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All work will be completed by 30 August 2019 at the latest. In line with UNESCO’s overall gender mainstreaming strategy, the contractor is expected to integrate a gender perspective and apply gender analysis and mainstreaming concepts whenever feasible.

Qualifications

The project lead should possess the following mandatory qualifications and experience:

- University degree at Ph.D., or masters level or equivalent in Education, Social Sciences, Political Sciences, or a related field;
- At least ten years of working experience acquired at the international level or in an international setting;
- Understanding and knowledge of UNESCO’s mandate and its programming in relation to higher education;
- Excellent analytical and drafting skills in English;
- Experience with assignments focusing on multi stakeholder partnerships, and/or higher education capacity building in Asia and the Pacific.

Verification of these qualifications will be based on the provided curriculum vitae.

How to submit a proposal

An offer comprising of:

1. A technical proposal, which should include a cover letter describing relevant professional experience to host the proposed meeting and produce the draft policy brief;
2. A financial proposal. Financial estimates should include detailed fees for the draft policy brief and meeting costs (i.e. catering and local accommodation) for 10-12 international guests in the proposed location. International travel will be managed separately by UNESCO.

The technical proposal and financial proposal should be attached in an email to UNESCO Bangkok in two separate files and sent to the following email address no later than 18 March 2019: eisd.bkg@unesco.org. For any requests for clarification, please contact Mr. Wesley Teter (wr.teter@unesco.org).