

Comprehensively Promoting ICT in Education towards 2030

Address at the 2017 International Forum on ICT and Education 2030

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Distinguished President Simataa and Chairman Worbs,
Distinguished Vice-Minister Pérez,
Dear Guests and Friends:

I welcome all of you to the beautiful city of Qingdao to discuss together the issue of ICT development in education under the Education 2030 Agenda. On behalf of the Ministry of Education of China, I would like to extend a warm welcome to all of the honoured guests attending the International Forum on ICT and Education 2030. We offer our congratulations for the convening of the Forum!

Presently, a wave of “informatization” characterized by the trends of digitalization, networked connectivity, and smart technology is sweeping across the world, and is rapidly changing our modes of production as well as our lifestyles. China is currently in the midst of a historic process of high-speed development of information and communication technologies, and will continue its efforts to advance this process. In 2016, China published the Outline on the National Information Technology Development Strategy, and during the period of the 13th Five-Year Plan, it will implement the “Internet Power” strategy, the National Big Data Strategy and the “Internet Plus” action plan. At the same time, we are working to enable information technology and the Internet to benefit people of all countries. At the Second World Internet Conference in 2015, President Xi Jinping put forward the “Four Principles” and “Five Initiatives” concerning the global governance of Internet development, which were well-received by the international community.

Not only has information technology changed our lives and modes of production, but it has also revitalized the field of education. Over the past few years, guided by the core aim of deepening and harmonizing information technology with the practices of education and teaching, ICT in education in China has garnered broad consensus, accelerated in its pace of progress, and developed rapidly. Faced with the demand for talent in the information age, we believe that ICT is revolutionizing education and has an immense impact on achieving educational goals and transforming education.

In 2012, China announced its first plan addressing ICT in education: the Ten-Year Development Plan on ICT in Education (2011-2020). The Plan contains the “Three Connections, Two Platforms” initiative, which refers to broadband connections in every school, connections to high-quality resources in every classroom, and connections to online learning spaces for every student, and the two public-service platforms of educational resources and education management. Our efforts over the past five years have allowed us to begin to build a wide-ranging and multi-level system of ICT in education, all aspects and indicators of which have seen exponential growth. Rates of Internet access in primary and secondary schools nationwide have increased from 25% to 88%, the proportion of multimedia classrooms has risen from 40% to 80%, the number of computers per 100 pupils in primary and secondary schools has grown from 8 to 12, and the number of online learning spaces for teachers and students has surged from 600,000 to more than 63 million. There are now over 10 million instructors participating in the “Outstanding Lessons, Gifted Teachers” programme, preparing over 7.3 million outstanding classes. Approximately 10 million primary and secondary school teachers, 200,000 vocational school instructors, and 100,000 elementary and middle school principals have already received ICT training.

ICT in education is an important part of the Modernizing Chinese Education 2030 initiative, which is being announced this year. As we progress towards 2030, we see ICT in education as a powerful force for boosting the modernization of education. We are adapting to developments in information technology; promoting transformation and innovation in education; exploring modes of education that are suitable for an information society; building a connected, digital, personalized, and lifelong education system; and exerting great efforts to make education more **open, appropriate, people-centred, equitable, and sustainable**.

Ladies and gentlemen, friends, in the future, competition will hinge ever more on talent and skills. The most fundamental requirement for education will be to cultivate talented people who can adapt to changing times, and the most indispensable ability of those talented people will be information literacy. Just as scientific knowledge was important during the industrial age, information literacy is truly important in the information age. The methods of education used during the former are no longer able to meet the demands of the latter in terms of cultivating talent. ICT in education has provided us with vast potential and unlimited possibilities to transform education. Technologically, it is characterized by digitalization, connectivity, smart devices, and multimedia, while it also has the educational features of openness, sharing, interactivity, and cooperation. For those reasons, ICT in education is a powerful starting point for promoting fairness, improving quality, and advancing reform in education, and it provides a path to solutions and a means for the future development of education.

As we move into that future, ICT in education must not only shoulder the task of reshaping convention, but must also take on the mission of continuous innovation. I would now like to share some of our experiences with you, in the interest of assuring future opportunities for development.

First is the deepening of integration. The main objective of ICT in education is to promote and serve the goals of education reform. Integrating information technology with education and teaching practices needs to be taken as the core concept permeating our work. ICT in education is not simply a technological issue, nor is it an ordinary question of applying information technology. In essence, it is a question of education. Information technology must be blended into the education system; there must be innovation in educational and pedagogical concepts, modes, content, and methods; the education system must be restructured, procedures must be reworked, and cultural ideas must be reformulated. Only then can we accomplish the goals of promoting reform and improving the level of development in education.

Second is sharing on a broad scale. Equality in education is an important basis for equality in society, and at its core lies the fair and balanced allocation of educational resources. ICT in education can breach the bounds of space and time, allowing for widespread sharing between government and society, the educational system and industry, city and countryside, across regions and schools, and between teachers and students. In particular, it is capable of inexpensively facilitating the delivery of high-quality educational resources to rural, remote, impoverished, and ethnic regions. It expands coverage of excellent educational resources via information technology, uses the Internet to solve problems of providing education to disadvantaged social groups, and greatly reduces educational gaps and the digital divide, thus providing people with access to better and more equitable education.

Third is diversity in participation. We adhere to the idea of walking with the “two legs” of the government and the market, in other words, moving forward by the simultaneous involvement of government and the private sector. It means using both the “invisible hand” and the “visible hand” to create a system in which government provides support and policy, companies and industry carry out projects, and schools benefit from sustainability. That has been one of our important experiences. The method highlights the leadership role of the government, allowing it to provide guidance and direction and conduct the overall planning to handle large-scale issues relating to policy. But it also gives full play to the decisive role of the market in allocating resources, guiding the participation of all sectors of society. Thus the roles of the market and the government are organically integrated and mutually reinforcing, such that they work as counterparts to advance

each other's objectives, forming an environment favourable to the development of ICT in education.

Fourth is innovation and leadership. ICT in education is a wide-ranging and systematic undertaking that consists of several aspects, including infrastructure, digital educational resources, instructor training, education and teaching reform, and education management, among others. At the same time, ICT in education is still relatively nascent and its applications, especially in classroom instruction, are still in the exploratory stage. There are very few tried-and-true experiences from which to draw lessons, and no ready-made models to be emulated. It is a task rich in potential for innovation. We need to liberate our thinking and boldly explore new ideas, using pilot projects and trials to pave the way for larger-scale applications, forging paths and methods for accelerating the promotion of ICT in education.

Fifth is the overall planning of development. ICT and informatization are changing education in a big way, and we must continue to go beyond existing technologies, established models, and rigid relationships to lead the way in educational reform and innovation. ICT in education should be systematically planned as a long-term strategy, and top-level design, broad deployment, and planned implementation should be used to promote the integration of various factors, such as personnel, systems, and resources, ultimately resulting in deeper and more universal applications of ICT. That holds true especially for countries and regions that have underdeveloped economies. Building the capacities of educational administrative departments, principals and school presidents, and teachers and instructors is crucial to achieving success. Better training for those groups will produce swift results in such areas as shifting conceptions, deepening understanding, clearly defining ideas, and enhancing confidence and initiative.

Ladies and gentlemen, friends, in 2015, in conjunction with UNESCO, we held here the first International Forum on ICT and Education. Ministers of Education, officials, scholars, school presidents, and teachers from nearly 100 countries and regions around the world took common positions on the goals of ICT in education and adopted the Qingdao Declaration outcome document, which laid out a blueprint for the future of ICT in education. The Qingdao Declaration carries important guidance and impetus for the global development of ICT in education, and will have a positive and long-lasting impact on the promotion of ICT in education, and thus the modernization of education.

Over the past two years, we have been implementing the Qingdao Declaration, the Education 2030 Goals and the Education 2030 Framework for Action, put forward by UNESCO. We sincerely look forward to working together with all countries to embrace opportunities for the rapid development of ICT in education. We will advance sustainable development in education at all levels and in all forms, including educational equality, basic infrastructure and facilities, teacher training, and vocational skills, with a view to ultimately achieving the goals of inclusive, equitable and high-quality education and universal lifelong learning. At this point, I would like to share four suggestions with all of you.

Firstly, the responsibility of government to drive progress should be strengthened. Governments should view ICT in education as a strategic activity and engage in its overall planning, increase investment, and persevere over the long term. While advancing ICT in education, governments must develop a deep understanding and take the initiative to achieve results. Government should actively guide developments in industry while giving full play to the role of the market, fostering a positive environment for development. It should also assist impoverished regions to reduce the digital divide and enhance the supply and quality of public education services.

Secondly, research and practical applications should be deepened and harmonized. We must place emphasis not only on researching new technologies, but also on researching how to combine those new technologies with education and teaching. We must truly promote change in education, and continue to push forward with enhancing the applications of ICT in education and

integrating innovative theory and practice. We must gradually transform information technology from an external factor that affects education to an intrinsic factor capable of spurring changes from deep within the education system; information technology should have a profound impact on the conceptions, modes, and culture surrounding education.

Thirdly, efforts should be made to improve information literacy among teachers and students. The core of ICT in education is people. It is necessary to improve the ICT teaching abilities of the instructor, the ICT learning capacities of the student, and the ICT leadership skills of the manager. We must intensify training efforts and monitor and assess information literacy at appropriate times in order to improve it. Most crucially, we need to cultivate information literacy in students and help them to develop their digital learning habits.

Fourthly, we should strengthen international exchanges and the sharing of results. ICT in education is a challenge and an opportunity that countries all across the world are facing together. In this regard, we commend UNESCO for its highly effective work. China is currently implementing the Education Action Plan for Advancing the Belt and Road Initiative, which advocates for equitable, inclusive, dynamic, and mutually beneficial cooperation in the area of education. It is our hope that countries will join hands to strengthen exchanges and cooperation among government, schools, expert groups, and industry, and collectively build international exchange platforms for theoretical and management research, technological research and development, and applications related to ICT in education.

Ladies and gentlemen, friends, ICT in education is an open endeavour. This Forum has provided us with a platform for exchange and sharing. We encourage all countries to move from development to consensus, from consensus to cooperation, and from cooperation to outcomes that are beneficial to everyone. China stands ready and willing to work with other countries to establish global mechanisms for cooperation and exchanges in the area of ICT in education. We are ready to stir up energy and innovative ideas together for global ICT in education, and collectively forge the future of education for our world.

Lastly, I wish the Forum great success, and may all of your deliberations and interactions here be fruitful! I wish the best to all of you and I thank you!