RECENSIONE

Information and Communication Technologies in Schools

■ **John Daniel**, Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO

All governments present at the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, April 2000, pledged to achieve a number of essential goals aimed at ensuring Education for All (EFA). I will mention only two of them that are particularly relevant for, and lie at the basis of, the development of this new publication -*ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes* (Goal 3) and *improving all aspects of the quality of education […] so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all* (Goal 6).

This new publication, initiated by the Division of Higher Education, entitled *"ICT in Schools: A Handbook for Teachers or How ICT Can Create New, Open Learning Environments"*, should be seen as complementary to the ones already published by the Division in the 2002-2003 biennium devoted to the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in teacher education.

The present handbook is principally designed for teachers and teacher educators who are currently working with, or would like to know more about, ICT in schools.

A major theme in the book concerns how ICT can create new, open learning environments and their instrumental role in shifting the emphasis from a teacher-centred to a learner-centred environment; where teachers move from being the key source of information and transmitter of knowledge to becoming a collaborator and co-learner; and where the role of students changes from one of passively receiving information to being actively involved in their own learning.

Evidence over the past years has clearly indicated that efforts to ensure equal access to educational opportunities and quality education for all must be accompanied by wide-ranging education reforms. Such reforms are not likely to succeed without addressing the new roles played by teachers in preparing students for an emerging knowledge-based and technology-driven society. Teachers must have access to adequate training and ongoing professional development and support and be motivated to use new teaching and learning methods and techniques.

Information and communication technologies must be harnessed to support EFA goals at an affordable cost. They have great potential for knowledge dissemination, effective learning and the development of more efficient education services. This potential will not be realized unless these technologies serve rather than drive the implementation of education strategies. To be effective, especially in developing countries, ICT should be combined with more traditional technologies such as books and radios and be more extensively applied to the training of teachers.

Education must reflect the diversity of needs, expectations, interests and cultural contexts. This poses particular challenges under conditions of globalization given its strong tendency towards uniformity. The challenge is to define the best use of ICT for improving the quality of teaching and learning, sharing knowledge and information, introducing a higher degree of flexibility in response to societal needs, lowering the cost of education and improving internal and external efficiencies of the education system.

I sincerely hope that this new publication will be both informative and useful for a wide range of users who all believe in, and pursue, a common goal *Quality Education for All.*

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A HANDBOOK FOR TEACHERS
or
How ICT Can Create New, Open Learning Environments