

## Koïchiro Matsuura

**K**oïchiro Matsuura was elected Director-General of UNESCO in November 1999 for a term of six years after a distinguished career in Japan's diplomatic service.

Upon taking office, Mr. Matsuura launched a comprehensive reform of UNESCO, streamlining its management structure, reinforcing its presence in the field and refocusing its activities on five priorities: basic quality education for all; water and ecosystems management; ethics of science and technology; cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue; and equitable access to information and knowledge.

While serving as Japan's Ambassador to France, Andorra and Djibouti (1994-1999), Mr Matsuura chaired UNESCO's World Heritage Committee (1988-1989). Other positions he held include those of Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Director-General of the Economic Cooperation Bureau, Director-General of the North America Division, all at the same ministry. He also represented his country in the USA, Hong Kong and Ghana. With an academic background in economics and law, Mr Matsuura is the author of five books about diplomacy and international relations.

**ISO Focus:** How has the mission of UNESCO, this year celebrating the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of its Constitution, evolved to meet the needs of our modern society?

**Koïchiro Matsuura:** UNESCO's mission to work for peace by reinforcing solidarity in education, science, culture and communication is as pertinent as ever but the changes that have taken place over the past 60 years have required a new focus. Persistent pover-



Photo: UNESCO/Burke Niamh

ty, environmental degradation, globalization and the economic, social and cultural changes it has engendered, along with the technological revolution we are witnessing, are the challenges facing us today and which UNESCO is addressing within its fields of competence. The provision of quality, lifelong, education for all is clearly an absolute priority, as is the sound management of the world's natural resources, especially fresh water, the safeguarding of biological and cultural diversity, along with our cultural and natural heritage, and the bridging of the digital divide.

**ISO Focus:** Standards are the vehicle for the transfer of knowledge, technology and good practices. How does UNESCO see the promotion of International Standards in education?

**Koïchiro Matsuura:** People are more mobile today than ever. Students, academics, employers and families are

constantly on the move. At the same time, economic liberalization is changing the face of education, which has become a huge international industry. According to the OECD, the higher-education market in its Member States in 2003 was worth some USD 30 billion annually and growing. Today's 80 million plus students worldwide are expected to number 160 million by 2025. In this context, international standards are absolutely essential. They establish the principles and norms for governments to abide by and set the benchmarks for quality.

UNESCO is the "keeper" of several standard-setting instruments in the education field, ranging from international to regional conventions<sup>1</sup> such as the Convention against Discrimination in Education, the Convention on Technical and Vocational Education, and the regional conventions on the recognition of studies, diplomas, degrees and other academic qualification in higher education. UNESCO has also elaborated several recommendations and declarations such as the Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers, the World Declaration on Higher Education or the International Charter of Physical Education and Sport.

However, such normative action needs to be further developed, not only to facilitate the transfer of ideas and knowledge, technology and good practices, but also to encourage a veritable dialogue between people and cultures, which we at UNESCO consider to be of paramount importance.

<sup>1</sup> An agreement between states covering particular matters, especially one less formal than a treaty.

**ISO Focus:** *The UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development officially launched at UN Headquarters in March 2005 will be instrumental in raising the quality of education systems. How can International Standards fit into the implementation schemes, in particular the ISO 9000 series of quality management standards?*

**Koïchiro Matsuura:** UNESCO believes that quality education is essential for sustainable development. However, the understanding of what constitutes a quality education is evolving. While in the past much of the emphasis on education related to cognitive understanding and development, now there is a need to also address the social and other dimensions of learning. Education is expected to address sustainable human development, peace and security, and the quality of life at individual, family, societal, and global levels.

It is thus obvious that a quality education must be offered within a managerial and administrative system that also supports effective learning. This presupposes a system that is well managed, with transparent processes guided by the implementation of good policies, an appropriate legislative framework and sufficient resources. Therefore quality management standards, such as the ISO 9000 series, could be considered when monitoring mechanisms are put in place to evaluate progress towards the goals of the Decade.

UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, France



Photo: UNESCO/ASPheer/Karin Hunziker

**ISO Focus:** *Open and distance learning institutions as well as conventional institutions recognize the potential of e-learning to improve the quality of teaching/learning interactions. What challenges do you see in achieving the full potential of e-learning? Where can International Standards help?*

**Koïchiro Matsuura:** The success of e-learning programmes depends not only on the technology used but also on the level of education concerned and the way it is delivered. A number of distance education projects using radio or television failed because they attempted to reproduce traditional face-to-face



## Guest View

education, especially in primary education; their scope was too ambitious and the educational and social risks were under-estimated; their human resources were mainly based on outside technical assistance, ignoring local capacity; and finally, some of them were principally technology driven.

### "The understanding of what constitutes a quality education is evolving."

Capacity building of e-education professionals is an essential factor of success, and must be approached in a systematic way based on a comprehensive definition of profiles and skills. All education professionals are concerned - teachers, e-learning and distance education designers and tutors, support and administrative staff, education technology specialists and information professionals.



Photo: UNESCO/SPher/Outmani Ahmed

logues of terms, deliverables detailed description, systems interoperability standards, etc.);

- Methods, guidelines and tools for human actors (including standard ratio) to design and produce deliverables and provide services;
- Quality criteria and methods to ensure quality of deliverables and services.

**ISO Focus:** UNESCO, in collaboration with ArTech, Japan, is organizing training courses for Eco-Kids instructors based on the Kids' ISO 14000 Programme. How do you see the programme expanding internationally? Can you please explain where International Standards can be used as the basis of other education programmes?

**Koïchiro Matsuura:** UNESCO believes and recognizes that the "education" in Education for Sustainable Development is not just formal schooling but embraces a wide range of learning experiences and programmes, such as the Kids' ISO 14000 Programme to promote environmental and sustainability awareness among children worldwide.

Such a programme helps promote an education that is relevant to the key problems of living in the 21st century, that empowers children to exercise their rights, and that cul-

tivates good citizenship locally, nationally and globally. Children will be both actors and partners in the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD, 2005-2014). The expansion of such a programme really depends on its level of adaptability to national and local contexts, educational systems, and the place of ESD in school and extra-curricular programmes; and how educators and people will perceive it in relation to other ESD learning initiatives that might already exist.

Just as ISO 14000 has been "explained" through an education programme, one could examine how other International Standards could serve as a basis for education or awareness raising initiatives. ■



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Networked applications must also be developed and operated not only for education purposes, but extended to education, institution and resources management. This implies a large variety of actors and systems, which must, therefore, interoperate and communicate.

To that purpose standards, methods, guidelines and tools are essential, must be developed and adopted. These should include:

- Standards for non-human components (such as metadata structure for information and education objects, cata-



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