

I. INTRODUCTION

Mr. William Loxley, Principal Education Specialist of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), briefly welcomed the participants and introduced Mr. Geert van der Linden, Vice President, Knowledge Management and Sustainable Development, ADB, to give the opening remarks.

Mr. van der Linden welcomed the participants and thanked the sponsors of the workshop, namely ADB, Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI), the governments of Australia and Republic of Korea, International Business Machines (IBM) Corporation and Microsoft Corporation.

He defined e-learning as simply the delivery of educational content via electronic media, including Internet, intranet, extranet, satellite, video, interactive television, and compact disc-read only memory (CD-ROM). He emphasized that e-learning is a powerful tool that frees teachers and students from the confines of the classroom. He also added that this can be applied to in-service teacher training, communication among school administrators, contacts between the school and community, and other uses that are still being discovered.

As far as the relationship of e-learning to a country's development is concerned, Mr. van der Linden stated that the creation of the national wealth of the country comes from the way it uses its investment and labor capital. Many developing countries are not able to provide students with the knowledge and skills training needed to compete in the increasingly sophisticated global workforce. Many students are not able to take advantage of learning and training due to vast distances from learning centers. Through e-learning, people in rural areas can now remain in their communities and access a world-class education. Thus, e-learning can provide a cost-effective solution to geographic gaps in education.

He stressed that if e-learning is properly harnessed, it can be the fuel that propels Asia's economies to new and greater heights. He cited various countries in Asia and the Pacific that have shown interest in the field of e-learning. Some have even embraced this

technology and it has become a way of life. He noted that the private sector will always be a key element in developing e-learning technology. However, the public sector also needs to do its part by establishing policies that embrace this type of education, and setting standards and regulations.

Mr. van der Linden stated that ADB is committed to the business of economic and social development. Innovative technologies related to human resources are key tools for poverty reduction. Thus, ADB is keen on learning new and best practices in applying e-learning to assist its developing member countries (DMCs). E-learning is important because it is a tool to develop a national resource, namely, an educated workforce.

Mr. Raymond Renfro, Director for Capacity Building and Training, ADBI, speaking on behalf of Mr. Peter McCawley, Dean of ADBI, gave a few welcoming words. Mr. Renfro began by warmly welcoming the participants, guests, and resource speakers to the workshop.

He noted that e-learning covers a wide set of applications, but people mostly focus on the "e," technical aspect rather than on the second part, which is learning. Some important aspects of e-learning include the specific needs of the target audience, the course content, the delivery mechanisms, and the tutorial and technical support.

He pointed out that one of the current debates on e-learning is the trade-off between traditional, instructor-led training and e-learning. Some of the major advantages of e-learning are individualization, flexibility, active participation, continuous availability, and cost effectiveness. While some countries in Asia and the Pacific are at the forefront and active users of e-learning, many developing countries are not making significant progress in e-learning and are falling behind their neighboring countries. Appropriate policies and incentives are needed in order to reverse this trend.

Mr. Renfro said that ADBI focuses on current priority research issues and capacity building in the DMCs. ADBI's main strategic objectives are in line with those of ADB, namely, poverty reduction, regional cooperation, private sector development, and governance. He said that one strategic priority of ADBI is the development of Internet-based, online training activities. He then described some of the activities of ADBI in this field.

Mr. Jeoung-Keun Lee, Senior Capacity Building Specialist, Capacity Building and Training, ADBI, introduced the workshop by outlining a timetable to accomplish its three objectives: to review and compare e-learning policies and programs, to overview recent trends

and technologies for e-learning, and to draft action plans (project proposals) to improve/introduce e-learning programs.

Mr. Lee emphasized that participants should be able to submit an action plan that would correspond to their country situation. This action plan would improve the design of the e-learning program in that country and if the action plan were feasible, it would eventually lead to proposals for possible funding.

He then asked participants to describe their expectations from the workshop. The responses included sharing information on e-learning programs with the rest of the group, learning more of e-technology for the future, creating or improving e-learning policies, learning how to measure success, contributing experiences and learning about country situations, learning various technologies and methodologies, sharing success and failure stories, and helping other countries in the e-learning field.