

Webinar Briefing Paper

Session: SS1-6 Overview

Date: 30 October, 2021

Time : 09.00 – 16.00

Session Overview

Speakers

- Dr. Krissanapong Kirtikara, Chairman of the Princess Maha Chakri Award Foundation and Advisor of Governing Board, Equitable Education Fund, Thailand
- Professor Juan Miguel Luz, Policy Analyst and Former Undersecretary, Department of Education, the Philippines
- Dr. Kann Puthy, Director of Department of Primary Education (PED), Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, Cambodia
- Dr. Naasirah Abdullah Teo, Head of Research and Planning Section at the Department of Planning, Development and Research, Ministry of Education, Brunei Darussalam
- Datu Dr. Haji Azhar Haji Ahmad, Director, Teacher Professionalism Division, Ministry of Education, Malaysia
- Mr. Lee Yan Kheng, Director, Professional Development Branch of the Academy of Singapore Teachers, Ministry of Education, Singapore
- Ms. Nouamkham Chanthaboury, Deputy Director-General, Department of General Education, Ministry of Education and Sports, Lao PDR
- Mr. Rachmadi Widdiharto. Director of Teacher and Education Personnel of Primary Education, Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, Indonesia
- Dr. Sadat B Minandang. Master Teacher I / Teacher-In-Charge Darping Elementary School, Schools Division of Cotabato City, MBHTE-BARMM, Philippines
- Mr. Vu Minh Duc. Director of the Department of Teachers and Education Administrators, the Ministry of Education and Training, Vietnam

- Mr. Duong Trung Kien. Expert, Department of Teachers and Education Administrators, Ministry of Education and Training, Vietnam
- Ms. Amy Bellinger. Education Workforce Initiative, Education Commission, United Kingdom
- Ms. Lurdes Rangel Goncalves. Teacher, Matata Primary School, Timor-Leste
- Professor Woothisarn Tanchai. Secretary General, King Prajadhipok's Institute, Thailand
- Dr. Pamela Cantor, Turnaround for Children's Founder & Senior Science Advisor, Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist, USA
- Dr. Marita Neitola, University Lecturer in Department of Teacher Education in Rauma, University of Turku, Finland
- *Mr. Tomio Ikoma, President and CEO, With us Corporation/Principal of Daiichi Gakuin High School, Japan*
- Mr. Ichiro Miyazawa, Head Ad interim UNESCO Myanmar Office
- *Programme Specialist Lifelong Learning and Literacy UNESCO Bangkok Office*
- Dr. Supakorn Buasai. Acting Managing Director, Equitable Education Fund, Thailand
- Mr. Suphat Champatong (Ph.D.) Permanent Secretary and Vice Chairperson of the Thai National Commission for UNESCO
- Ms. Kyungsun Kim. UNICEF Thailand Representative
- Mr. Shigeru Aoyagi. Director of UNESCO. Bangkok, Thailand
- Dr. Ethel Agnes P. Valenzuela. Director, Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization.
- Mr. Prasert Tepanart. National Director, Save the Children Thailand.

Moderator

- Ms. Aarti Saihjee, Chief of Education, UNICEF Thailand
- Dr. Kritsachai Somsaman. Deputy Director (Administration and Communication), SEAMEO
- *Ms. Thantida Wongprasong, Director of Innovations and Scholarships, Equitable Education Fund, Thailand*
- Dr. Tinsiri Siribodhi. UNICEF, Thailand

Session Summary

The journey of Education for All started 30 years ago and it continues today. The main goal is to assess what needs to be done to achieve the sustainable development goals, particularly SDG4 (Sustainable Development Goal 4) to ensure inclusive and equitable education by 2030. As the COVID-

19 pandemic has shifted the way we educate our youth, new opportunities have also arisen. Teachers are the key to success in reducing the equity gap in education and there is a need for quality teachers that embrace change and can adapt to the needs of the students. This conference can bring together the key stakeholders to help open lines of communication and discuss ways in which to support teachers.

Lessons learned from the different countries throughout the region show a variety of challenges as countries respond to the pandemic and avoid learning loss. New curriculum and evaluation methods were implemented and the professional development of teachers was prioritized. Teachers were identified as the most important actors in education and were the key in the frontlines, especially in remote and socioeconomically disadvantaged areas. Cooperation between different stakeholders is necessary to identify educational needs and empower teachers to address these needs.

Countries outside the region including Japan, Finland, and America have built support systems for students and have focused on the health and wellbeing of both teachers and students. Mental health is a key area and teaching to the whole student is a concept that has gained importance in these countries. Socio-emotional health of students and educators and this helps give context and meaning to the experiences that the students will have. There is a call for a new design that helps positive developmental relationships, safe learning environments, and rich experiences that help students learn and discover what they are capable of.

The question of how to reach the goal of equitable education involves five steps: create the vision of equitable teachers, promote continuous professional development of equitable teachers, decentralize support systems for teachers to be leaders with responsibilities, review teacher education, and monitor and disseminate evidence effectively.

National governments, international organizations working within countries, and regional organizations work toward achieving these goals. Cooperation between these organizations is key to open communication, help spread good practices, and promote capacity building for teachers. Strategic alliances and partnerships between organizations at the local, national, and regional levels must reflect this commitment to equitable education.

Recommendations

Empowering teachers to ensure equitable education is the key to achieving education goals, particularly the Sustainable Development Goal 4 to ensure inclusive and equitable education by 2030. Capacity building and professional development of teachers will help them better address the needs of the students and will create a network of capable teachers that will help support good practices and evidence-based solutions. The goals of educational policies must include expanding access to education, inclusion and equality, gender equality, providing quality education, lifelong learning, helping disadvantaged children, as well as other global aspirations. Alternative forms of education might help reduce the disparity gap between disadvantaged and advantaged students and access to technology will play a key role especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Supporting and empowering teachers is vital for these aspirations. Incentives and opportunities for professional development should be available for educators. To encourage learning continuity, there needs to be active support for the implementation of various educational activities through various channels.

Teachers are the key to education and the capacity building of teachers will help bridge the gap between policy and meeting the educational needs of the students. Teachers are the ones with boots on the ground and efforts should be made to help make them the best teachers that they can be, improve communication and establish networks with like-minded teachers, and provide them with the tools and training that teachers will use to achieve strides toward education goals.

Next Steps

Governments must start using the language of a vision of equitable education. Communication between stakeholders must be regular and consistent in order for it to gain momentum. With these lines of communication open, evidence from studies can be disseminated to help foster better evidence-based practices in education. These networks will be at the national, regional, and international levels.

Flexibility for schools to address the needs of the students must be given. Each school and student is unique and educations at the local level must be given the freedom to best suite each student. The best way to achieve this is to empower and build capacity of the teachers so that they can deliver the best form of education for students, especially disadvantaged students.

Speaker Remarks

Dr. Krissanapong Kirtikara. Chairman of the Princess Maha Chakri Award Foundation, Equitable Education Fund, Thailand

“At the end, we want to take actions, make it [equitable education] a reality and overcome the challenges.”

Professor Juan Miguel Luz, Policy Analyst and Former Undersecretary, Department of Education, the Philippines

“The importance of focusing on equity; you want to focus on equity not just to level the playing field but because we want to bring down costs to society... There is a high cost of leaving people behind.”

Mr. Ichiro Miyazawa, Head Ad interim UNESCO Myanmar Office Programme Specialist Lifelong Learning and Literacy UNESCO Bangkok Office

“The important point is to keep the governments connected and try to support each other. I highly recommend that this kind of meeting, digitally or physically, keep continuously meeting. Just keep up learning with each other to create good momentum. So that is the best way to keep this momentum for equitable education.”

Dr. Supakorn Buasai, Aciting Managing Director, Equitable Education Fund, Thailand

“While the situation is improving, it remains a challenge providing quality education to the 5% to 10% of children and youth who are the poorest.”

Mr. Suphat Champatong Ph.D. Permanent Secretary and Vice Chairperson of the Thai National Commission for UNESCO

“The pandemic was the ticket for us as educators to revisit and redefine innovative ways to overcome not only the challenges of access to quality education but also how to enhance inclusive education and ensure that no one is left behind.”

Dr. Ethel Agnes P. Valenzuela. Director, Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization.

“Teachers have to adapt and to adopt to the new alternative ways so that children will learn and that equitable quality education will be for everyone. But that is hard because we are still in harsh

economic and education crisis. The education disruptions and school closures caused by COVID-19 have confirmed the critical role of teachers.”

Key Evidence

Learning has been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic for more than 3 million students in the region as they wait for the first days of onsite learning. The learning of fifty million students has been affected and it is estimated to set them back over six months. However, new technologies have allowed students to find alternative delivery methods of education. Alternative forms of education, multilingual education, and alternative channels of education are reaching out to minority students. The Princess Maha Chakri Award Foundation has witnessed teachers engage in practices that support equitable education. Living with COVID-19 has widened the equity gap, however, new policies and practices were developed to help narrow this gap.

Recent trends have shown a more decentralized approach toward education at the national and local levels. Education for All has witnessed increasingly qualified teachers going to remote and socioeconomically disadvantaged areas where they are given greater independence in planning and curriculum development to meet the needs of students.

Challenges, good practices

Many of the challenges in equitable education involve reaching the last mile or the last few percent of students in order to achieve Education for All. There are many unique and complex problems and challenges that cannot be solved easily through a top down strategy. Geographic location, language, social and cultural norms, and others are all issues that are best solved locally through flexible education systems and capable teachers that reach out to these groups to ensure inclusive and equitable education.