CONCEPT NOTE

2015 Regional Meeting
Asia-Pacific Regional Review of the Status and the Rights of Teachers
24-25 February 2015
Bangkok, Thailand

Background and Rationale

The EFA Global Monitoring Report 2013/4 reported that 57 million children are still not in school. There are serious doubts that a key EFA goal – universal primary education – will be met by 2015 unless governments step up their efforts to recruit an additional 1.6 million teachers. The quality of education raises another grave concern: even for those who are in school, one third of primary school-aged children are not learning the basics. In the foreword of the report, Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, emphatically reiterated that an education system is only as good as its teachers, supported by evidence that the quality of education improved when teachers are supported, and it deteriorates when they are not.

The 1966 ILO/UNESCO recommendations concerning the status of teachers and the 1997 Recommendation concerning the status of higher education teaching personnel are key documents that support the improvement of status and working conditions of teachers. While significant improvement in many areas have been achieved, clearly, more needs to be done. In 2006, UNESCO Bangkok organized the Asia Regional Seminar on the Status of Teachers: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers to examine the situation of teachers’ status and working conditions in 11 selected countries in the region, namely Cambodia, China, Kazakhstan, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Republic of Korea, Pakistan, Thailand and Viet Nam.

Results revealed that the general trend in teacher education seems to be that the more developed the country, the higher the academic qualifications and the longer the training at the pre-service level. However, the level of qualification for teachers who are already in the service varies from country to country, with teachers in the pre-school level more likely to have the least qualifications compared to teachers at higher educational level. In terms of the factors that influenced the status and working condition of teachers, most countries report on low salary scales while class size varies from country to country and from region to region within the countries but tends to be higher in urban areas. In addition, heavy workload has been a major complaint of teachers especially at the lower school levels where they are required to teach more hours than those in upper levels. These poor working conditions including the lack of opportunities for advancements are also major areas of dissatisfaction for choosing teaching as a career. At the end of the seminar, some of major issues and challenges identified were given recommendations taking into account the diverse set-up of the Asia-Pacific Region.

As a follow-up to this initiative, and to contribute to the dialogues on EFA and post-2015 education agenda, UNESCO Bangkok initiated a study to review the status of teachers in the
Asia and Pacific region with special attention given to the rights of teachers. Specifically, the objectives of the study were to 1) review the current status and working conditions of teachers; 2) examine the rights and privileges of teachers and 3) devise policy recommendations to attract qualified teachers and motivate them to remain in the teaching profession.

The study will be conducted by participating institutions and individuals in 8 countries in the Asia Pacific Region namely: 1) Uzbekistan, 2) Mongolia, 3) Republic of Korea, 4) Samoa, 5) Pakistan, 6) Sri-Lanka, 7) Cambodia, and 8) Indonesia. To share the preliminary findings, this Regional meeting is organized by UNESCO Bangkok as a platform to discuss and share the results of the national studies conducted with the end in view of finalizing both the National and Regional Reports by April/May 2015.

Objectives

The main objective of the meeting is to provide a platform to:

1) Share and discuss the main findings of the research studies conducted in the eight (8) participating countries in the Asia-Pacific Region.
2) Agree on follow-up activities to finalize the national and regional reports

Expected Outcomes

1) 8 National reports presented, discussed and commented for the purposes of revision and finalization
2) Draft regional synthesis with policy recommendations presented and discussed
3) Follow-up activities and timetable to finalize the national and regional reports agreed upon by all participants

Organizer
UNESCO Bangkok

Participants
Approximately 20 participants from 8 participating countries, partner research and teacher training institutions, experts and UNESCO-Bangkok officers and staff

Venue
Holiday Inn Bangkok Sukhumvit 22, Thailand,

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