Workshop Concept Note

Pre-primary Teacher Development in South-East Asia
Radisson Blu Plaza Bangkok, 1-3 July 2014, Bangkok, Thailand

Background

Early childhood care and education (ECCE) covers the period below the age of eight, ranging from ensuring good prenatal care to a smooth transition into – and early success in – primary school. As such, ECCE is the foundation of lifelong learning. Research shows that children who participate in ECCE programmes are more ready for school, complete school on time, plan their families better, earn higher incomes, become productive adults and educate their own children more effectively. Teacher-child interactions are considered to be one of the most important factors that affect the quality of ECCE. In reality, however, participation in and the quality of pre-primary education vary substantially among and within countries, and equitable access to quality ECCE programmes remains a major challenge for all countries. The lack of adequate training, certification and incentives for ECCE practitioners (teachers, caregivers) is a widespread and growing challenge.

Southeast Asian countries have made important quantitative and qualitative progress in the field of ECCE, and most countries have developed national ECCE policies as well as standards or curricular frameworks. Enrolment in pre-primary programmes has increased steadily. Since the 45th SEAMEO Council Conference (Cebu, 2010), the importance of ECCE, particularly in promoting quality education for all, has been highlighted, and UNESCO Bangkok and SEAMEO Secretariat have explored ways to collaborate in a project that focuses on profiling and analyzing policies and systems in pre-primary teacher education and professional development in Southeast Asia, with a view to developing regional guidelines to support SEAMEO Member Countries’ further efforts to strengthen their ECCE workforce.

In this context, UNESCO proposed a project entitled “Pre-primary Teacher Development in Southeast Asia”, and the Government of Japan agreed to provide financial support to this project through the Japan Funds-in-Trust. Moreover, the 36th SEAMEO High Officials Meeting (Bangkok, February 2014) unanimously agreed that SEAMEO and UNESCO would collaborate in implementing this project and endorsed the participation of the SEAMEO Member Countries in this project.

This UNESCO-SEAMEO joint project aims to contribute to the qualitative improvement of pre-primary education by supporting the professionalization and capacity development of pre-primary teachers. The project is expected to result in the development of the Southeast Asian Guidelines and country-level action plans, which will be submitted to Ministers of Education for their endorsement and which will guide subsequent country-level actions to improve pre-primary teacher education and professional development policies and systems.

Workshop Objective

The workshop aims to discuss the SEAMEO countries' achievements and challenges in the field of pre-primary teacher education and professional development and develop a framework for the Southeast Asian Guidelines for Pre-primary Teacher Development.
Expected Outputs

1. Good practices, lessons learnt and remaining challenges identified and discussed among SEAMEO countries
2. A draft framework for the Southeast Asian Guidelines for Pre-primary Teacher Development prepared, to be presented to the 37th SEAMEO High Officials Meeting (November 2014).

Inputs

- Analysis of the survey results based on a questionnaire sent from UNESCO-SEAMEO Secretariat to the 11 SEAMEO countries
- Country participants’ sharing of experiences, achievements and challenges on specific policy issues related to pre-school teachers (different issues will be proposed to each country)
- Global guidelines and frameworks related to (pre-primary) teachers (e.g. 1966 ILO-UNESCO Recommendation Concerning the Status of Teachers; ILO Policy Guidelines on the Promotion of Decent Work for Early Childhood Education Personnel; World Bank-Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER))
- Experiences, perspectives and recommendations of the Asia-Pacific Network for Early Childhood (ARNEC) and the SEAMEO Regional Centre for Educational Innovation and Technology (SEAMEO INNOTECH).

Scope

As generally defined at the international level, “early childhood” encompasses the period from birth to 8 years of age. However, countries establish a distinct educational level (or levels) for programmes aimed at supporting the learning and development of young children before their entry to primary education. In so doing, each country employs a different terminology (e.g. ECD/ECCD/ECE, nursery, kindergarten, pre-school) and defines different age groups and classifications for programmes.

In this workshop and the project in general, we use the term “pre-primary education” to refer to Level 0 (early childhood education) of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) to emphasise the intentionally educational aspect of ECCE services while it is understood that the best ECCE (and pre-primary education for that matter) takes a holistic approach to children’s development and learning. Moreover, we recognise that each country has different policy set-ups, and therefore each country is free to consider age-groups and programme types as relevant to the country context.

ISCED level 0 refers to early childhood programmes that have an intentional education component, with the following main criteria:

- **Educational properties of the programme:** typically designed with a holistic approach to support children’s early cognitive, physical, social and emotional development and introduce young children to organized instruction outside of the family context. Programmes are not necessarily highly structured but are designed to provide an organized and purposeful set of learning activities in a safe physical environment. They allow children to learn through interaction with other children under the guidance of staff/educators typically through creative and play-based activities. **Programmes providing only childcare (supervision, nutrition and health) are not covered by ISCED.**

- **Institutional context:** usually school-based or otherwise institutionalised for a group of children (e.g. centre-based, community-based, home-based). ISCED level 0 excludes purely family-based arrangements that may be purposeful but are not organised in a programme.

- **Typical target age of children:** ISCED level 0 recognises that ECCE programmes are often separated between early childhood development programmes targeted at children
aged 0-2 years and pre-primary education targeted at children aged 3 years until the age to start primary education.

- Programme intensity/duration: ISCED recommends the minimum intensity and duration to improve cross-national comparability of at least the equivalent of 2 hours per day and 100 days a year of educational activities.

Participants

Representatives of the 11 SEAMEO countries will be invited (Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam). It is expected that at least two persons from government agencies—one responsible for ECCE or pre-primary education policies and the other for teacher policies—participate from each country.

Regional and global development partners, such as ARNEC, SEAMEO-INNOTECH, UNICEF, ILO, ADB, the World Bank, will be invited as resource persons, in addition to the two co-organizers, UNESCO Bangkok and the SEAMEO Secretariat.

Working Language

English will be the working language of the workshop.

Contact

Ms Mami Umayahara
Programme Cycle Management Specialist and Programme Specialist for ECCE
UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education
920 Sukhumvit Road
Bangkok 10110 Thailand
Email: m.umayahara@unesco.org
Website: http://www.unescobkk.org
Phone: +66 391 0577 (x. 525)

Ms Abigail Cuales Lanceta
Programme Officer III (Information)
SEAMEO Secretariat
920 Sukhumvit Road
Bangkok 10110 Thailand
Email: abigail@seameo.org
Website: http://www.seameo.org/
Phone: +66 (0) 2 391 0144