Abstracts

Day 1: 16 October 2013

Keynote Address on Teaching and Learning in Asia-Pacific

Kerry Kennedy, Hong Kong Institute of Education

There is general agreement that learning is the key ingredient for creating both productive and socially just societies. Learning can take place anywhere, anytime. Yet schools have a special role in supporting young people to become active learners who can better understand the world in which they live, develop strategies for improving it and make a difference in their lives and those of people around them.

Yet there is no single prescription for ensuring learning is successful and accessible to all. Western learning theories have often been developed as though culture and context do not matter – what works in one place will work everywhere. Yet we have seen research from Asia that suggests learning takes place in unique ways depending on the learners, their teachers, the contexts in which they learn and the values they bring to the learning task.

This presentation will argue that the way ahead is to focus on the influence that different contexts have on learning and to understand how these contexts can be shaped to support the development of active learners.

The agenda is global – enhancing learning. The action is local – understanding local contexts. Research will play an important as we seek to understand learning and the contexts that create it.

Presentation of Regional Overviews

East Asia, Southeast Asia and Oceania – Sunhee Paik, Seoul National University

The study aims to examine pedagogical approaches in the Asia-Pacific region and furthermore to suggest pedagogical innovation for future education. To this end, we have used TIMSS 2011, PISA 2009, and TALIS 2008 data sets. The findings indicate that pedagogical approaches vary across regions and culture. For example, Northeast Asian teachers less frequently use instructional strategies to engage students in learning than Southeast Asian teachers do, and Northeast Asian students reported worse relations with teachers than their Southeast Asian counterparts. The findings also indicate that teachers may have challenges and difficulties putting their constructivist beliefs into practice. The last finding is that pedagogical practices are related to affective achievement rather than academic achievement. Based on the findings, suggestions for pedagogical innovations in the Asia-Pacific region will be addressed.
South Asia – Anjlee Prakash, Learning Links Foundation

The research study examines pedagogical practices in South Asia. The study reflects the large gap between policy and practice. At the policy level all countries strive for a child centered pedagogy, but in practice they lack a more detailed strategy and the necessary resources for implementation. Prevailing pedagogy remains teacher centered ‘chalk and talk’ methodology. There are innovative methodologies found at private schools, non-formal schools and some government schools. The pedagogical methods are impacted by the culture and the socio-economic status at such schools. On the whole, South Asia requires the middle ground in pedagogy; between teacher centered and student focused pedagogy. The pedagogical changes need to be incremental, giving room for teachers to self-reflect, and need to be well connected to the curriculum and the form of assessment.

Presentation of Country Studies I

Japan – Shinobu Yume Yamaguchi and Akina Ueno, Tokyo Institute of Technology

As rapid globalization allows us to mobilize people, goods, capital and information, it has brought new issues. In addition to worldwide economic stagnation, global issues, including depletion of natural resources and repeated natural disasters across regions, cannot be tackled without collaborative approaches by multiple countries. Japan is facing multifaceted issues such as an accelerated aging society and limited energy supply after the Great East Japan Earthquake. The unpredictable catastrophe has resurbed the importance of our collective traditional values and responsibilities in the society.

The paper highlights two specific features of the 2008 New Courses of Study. First, enhancing language proficiency is considered as one of the most important foundations to develop a variety of skills related to communication and critical thinking. Introducing verbal activities is recommended in all teaching subjects, influencing the shift of teaching methods to student-centred approaches. Second, special activities are another feature which reflect Japanese tradition and culture, serving as a base for developing morality through hands-on experiences in and outside of schools. Such special activities include class meetings, daily cleaning, collective serving of school lunch, and student governance, among others. Further, the importance of participation of parents and representatives of local communities in education is emphasized. “Community School” systems strengthen local community participation; the fostering of diverse skills and competencies among children is no longer achieved by school education only. MEXT currently identifies 96 pilot primary schools with innovative practices. As an example, the case of Otemachi primary school is introduced, which redesigned its curriculum into seven fields, namely, Life and General Studies, Math and Science, Languages, Creativity and Communication, Health, Human Relationship, and Reflective Learning, focusing on practical skills and competencies.

The paper concludes by identifying five key aspects to further promote the fostering of diverse skills and competencies from policy into practice as follows: 1) conceptualization of the definition and values of 21st century skills needed to be shared among stakeholders; 2) effective integration of the 21st century skills in classroom lessons, requiring innovative and diverse teaching methods; 3) strengthening teacher training is a must to effectively implement the New Courses of Study; 4) establishing an appropriate assessment system is crucial to promote innovative teaching methods; and 5) involvement of parents and community continues to be essential.
Nepal – Ganesh Singh, Tribhuvan University

Access to education has improved, but the challenge is to ensure quality in the Nepalese education system. Present practices are influenced by the past practices and clear evidence of recitation, repetition, rote memorization, and drill can be seen in today’s classroom. There have been several initiatives to improve classroom pedagogy in Nepal. However, studies repeatedly show that in practice classroom has been dominated by lecture, textbook reading, paraphrasing, drill, and rote memorization. At the higher grades, examination is the focus.

Several innovative initiatives were undertaken to improve classroom pedagogy by various organizations using methods such as child friendly environment, positive experiences, working cooperatively, interactivity, creativity, participation, continuous assessment, remedial instruction, critical thinking, and others. Evaluation reports indicated positive outcomes and improved practices, however, when innovations are expanded or mainstreamed the impacts seem to wear off. Future endeavors need to learn lessons from the past and focus on the sustainability of programmes from the planning phase onward. Formative research needs to be built into the innovative programs to guide successful implementation.

Implementation should be step-wise, coordinated and linked in a chain rather than a one-time event. Innovations should start small, experiment and expand the successful aspects. Concerned agencies, persons and systems should put students at the centre of pedagogical practices to improve their learning and skills.

Republic of Korea – Kyung-Suk Chang, Korea Institute for Curriculum and Evaluation

This study aims to contribute to future reforms in the education policies and educational practices for improved learning through increased knowledge and understandings of pedagogical approaches. The study took the form of a case study using secondary sources research reports, documents, and statistical. The historical overview reveals that the traditional educational system is characterized by heavy focus on memorization of subject knowledge transmitted by teachers’ lecturing, paper-and-pencil test, and norm-referenced assessment. It is found that currently multi-pronged efforts have been made at the government level and implemented at schools across the country. The prevailing pedagogical approach is ‘Differentiated Instruction’, reconstructing the national curriculum, which is designed to maximize effects of teaching on learning by satisfying students’ different needs in different contexts. The prevailing assessment is found to be the traditional pencil and paper test with multiple choices. However, it is shown that instructional strategies such as problem solving, cooperative learning, or project class are used to help students think in a creative way, get motivated and be fully engaged in meaningful learning. Students take more responsibility for their own learning, communicate with others, acknowledge differences among individuals, and show increased self-esteem and self-efficacy. The analysis of the gathered data shows that for the assessment of non-cognitive skills the teacher uses the process-oriented, developmental, criterion-referenced, and formative approach. In the process-oriented assessment students take active part in the assessment process through self- or peer-assessment. Information from the assessment is reflected back into the process of making instructional decisions to improve teaching and learning, further leading to the bottom-up approach to curriculum change within schools. In this system, curriculum, pedagogy and assessment are very closely linked to each other. Recommendations are given for effective change in pedagogical approaches to teaching and learning non-cognitive skills for future education.
The overall objective of this study is to contribute to future reforms in national education policies and the education practices for improved learning through increased knowledge and understandings of pedagogical approaches in Thailand context. The specific objectives are to first, identify and critically analyze diverse features of pedagogical approaches in Thailand. Second, to harness lessons learnt to identify, based on evidence, example of innovations which can inform future educational practices. Third, to formulate policy recommendations for the development of pedagogical approaches. Research related to pedagogical approaches are described and investigated through secondary data sources. The in-depth interviews with teachers in primary and secondary education are extremely useful for the study as well.

Researching good practices of the public schools revealed the successes of project-based learning and inquiry-based learning using ICT as a learning tool. In regard to English instruction, simulation and situated learning are examples of innovative pedagogies to promote English for communication. Acquisition of non-cognitive skills or life skills was enhanced by project-based learning in different areas, namely environment awareness, sufficiency economy, thinking skills, ethics and morality, democracy promotion, and Thai local wisdom appreciation and preservation. In addition to that, it was found that pedagogical practices of alternative schools are considered as instruction innovation.
Presentation of Country Studies II

Indonesia – Muhammad Zuhdi, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta

This paper presents a study on prevailing pedagogical approaches in Indonesia. Methodologically, this study is based on a number of research papers and theses as well as interviews with expert and practitioners. Three kinds of pedagogical practices (MIR, PAIKEM and GASING) are described and elaborated as cases how Indonesian educators make some innovations and creative practices in pedagogy.

The study shows that in 2005, the Indonesian government released a regulation (Peraturan Pemerintah) on national standards of education. Various other policies and programs were created based on the national standards, including national curriculum, national examination, and teacher trainings. In addition to the above regulations and programs, there are also some other innovative practices to improve education quality. This implementation of PAIKEM and GASING as learning models indicate the growing awareness of the importance of creative and fun learning.

In addition to the improvement of the quality of learning of conventional subjects, the Indonesian government also pays particular attention to non-cognitive skills. Knowing, as character education, non-cognitive skills in Indonesia are formulized based on the national philosophy and local wisdoms. The skills are internalized by students through various activities both at school and outside school.

Beside the above creative endeavors, there are two educational policies that remain controversial in Indonesia: centralized curriculum and national examination. The government views the implementation of the two policies as part of the application of national standards in education, but some educators are skeptical due to some discrepancies in the implementation.

Malaysia – Zailah Zainuddin and Noraini Kassim, Ministry of Education

The School Improvement Program (SIP) is a strategy under the Malaysian Educational Transformation Program. SIP entails a systematic and organized structure of the implementation of the Education National Key Result Areas (NKRA) initiatives with special focus on guidance to teachers to improve their teaching through the School Improvement Specialist Coaches (SISC) program. This paper outlines the SISC Program, its structure, implementation, impact and aspirations.

The study used a qualitative approach through the use of classroom observation, interviews and document analysis. The findings of the study revealed that SISC has reduced the number of low performing schools (band 6 and 7 schools) throughout the country especially in the rural areas. Findings also show that SISC has made an impact on students’ and teachers’ behavior, teaching and learning strategies, and the motivation of coaches. The findings also highlighted the strengths of the SISC program such as the teachers felt motivated and cared for, enhanced collaboration between teachers, and rejuvenated teaching and learning strategies. Where coaches are concerned, they benefited from the SISC program in their professional development as well as in extending their roles as excellent teachers.
**Singapore – Mary George Cheriyan, Raffles Girls’ School Pedagogical Research Lab**

This study describes typical pedagogical approaches in schools which are aimed at fostering 21st Century competencies. It also makes a case for a teacher-training approach that models the intended learning environment. In such a model, lecturers themselves use innovative instructional approaches such as blended learning and reflective practice so that teacher-trainees can learn to teach in those ways as well.

At the same time, the study reveals the tension between the acknowledgement of the value of transversal skills and the actual classroom practice and focus. This study also highlights individuals and schools who have been able to create innovative practices amidst transitional challenges. These instances prove that high-stakes exams and a thinking, collaborative culture are not necessarily mutually exclusive. What is important is the clarity of learning outcomes and the willingness of individuals and institutions to respond to the current realities and the learners’ needs.

**Presentation of Country Studies III**

**Fiji – Cresantia Frances Koya Vaka’uta, University of the South Pacific**

Applying a mixed-method approach, the Fiji case study emphasizes numeric data which are further informed by narratives. Participants included 80 teachers from three select primary schools and five select secondary schools, 10 Teacher Educators and 10 Ministry of Education Officials.

Findings indicate that there are common understandings of the educational context and needs in Fiji. Across the three samples - Ministry of Education Officials, Teacher Educators and Teachers – the consensus is that education needs to keep abreast of the changing educational landscape. Participants shared the belief that the post-2015 Fijian will need to acquire a broad set of attributes, values, knowledge and skills in order to participate fully in society.

It is evident that this research simply scratches the surface of the pedagogical dynamic in Fiji. This report therefore recommends that further in-depth research be undertaken with the Ministry of Education’s Research Unit to better understand and document the phenomenon. Another major recommendation is the need for an educational summit. The first and only summit held in Fiji took place in 2005 bringing together stakeholders from across the nation. Given the current review of the NCF and its impending implementation, it would be both timely and wise to engage in a national forum to discuss the role and potential of education in Fiji beyond traditional goals of passing exams for employment purposes and higher education. The idea of life-skills and lifelong learning will need to be discussed at the national level to ensure that there is a whole-network of support for education.
India – Deepika Sharma, Learning Links Foundation

This study puts forth some observations on the current pedagogical practice changes taking place in the education system. It relies on two sources. Firstly, on writings and publications which have outlined and analyzed the state of pedagogy in recent times and secondly on a small survey of teachers in a small number of urban schools, as well as policy makers regarding their opinions on current practices. Admittedly, the sample sizes are small but provide valuable insights and validation of the opinions of the policy makers.

The analysis shows that National Curriculum Framework 2005 is a gold standard in pedagogical approaches to be followed in schools. In short, the national initiative is an attempt to move away from rote learning, ‘chalk and talk’ in classrooms to project-based, collaborative, inquiry led pedagogies. The initiative is relatively new and a huge planned effort is required to get teachers trained in the new system and in understanding the shift in pedagogy approaches from exam-based to a child-centric one, mediated by multiple types of assessments for classroom learning.

At the periphery the study touches upon some exemplary initiatives taken by NGOs to support schools in different pedagogies for first generation learners, underachievers as well as differently abled children. The study also briefly touches upon the scope of ICT enabled pedagogy that can lead to innovative practices in classrooms while also enabling access and equity – as is needed in the Indian education system.

Kyrgyzstan – Duishon Shamatov, Nazarbayev University

This is a report based on a study in Kyrgyzstan and is part of a larger multi-country study. This study aims to contribute to future reforms in the national education policies and educational practices for improved learning through increased knowledge and understandings of pedagogical approaches in the Asia-Pacific context. Specifically, this study in Kyrgyzstan has been guided by the following questions: (a) What is (are) the prevailing pedagogical approach(es) used in the education system in Kyrgyzstan? (b) Is there any innovative practice among the existing pedagogical approaches which is found to be effective for learning? If so, what are these practices, and how and in what ways are they effective? And (b) What are some of the features of a pedagogical approach that respond to the changing learning requirements of the future? To collect data on the above research questions, interviews and document analysis were employed as the main instruments. The study findings were categorized into the following five interrelated areas: (a) Philosophy, traditions (culture and families) and values that govern / shape education and learning; (b) Relationship between curriculum, pedagogy and assessment in Kyrgyzstan; (c) Teaching methods in pre-service and in-service training; (d) Classroom dynamics and teaching practices in primary and secondary education; and (e) Development of non-cognitive / 21st century skills in Kyrgyzstan.
The educational debate is expanding to include the extent to which the current pedagogical approaches have influenced the quality of education and met learners’ needs: essentially, have the features of teaching and learning methods responded to the changing learning requirements of the future? This case study engages these questions. It reviews innovative practices reflected in the national policies, school curriculum, assessment, and teacher training curricula. It presents pedagogical approaches that are currently adopted in the primary and secondary schools as well as promoted for future teachers in the teacher training institution in Viet Nam. It also seeks to analyze how the approaches are influenced by curriculum and assessment practices. It searches for a description of the acquisition and development of non-cognitive and cognitive skills. The study seeks to find out, what, if any, methods are imparted and acquired and whether the role of family/community has an impact on pedagogical approaches that respond to future learning requirements.
Elaine Unterhalter, Institute of Education, University of London

This paper builds from work done since 2005 on the history of the selection of the education goals, targets, and indicators for the MDGs and the Dakar Framework and the ways these have been interpreted in practice. From 2008 to 2011 empirical data was collected on these processes in a range of sites, from multi-lateral organizations to schools serving poor communities in South Africa and Kenya. This investigation indicated how the practice of setting goals and targets had positive outcomes in relation to some features of planning, monitoring and evaluation, but has also had perverse effects. Some of the most troubling of these include limited notions of sufficiency and equity, and lack of clarity regarding how the indicator framework articulates with existing rights instruments. Institutional cultures were noted that displaced blame to the poor for targets that were not met. It appears important to consider how to mitigate aspects of gaming the system and address how education connects across social development. In reviewing the process of setting goals and targets for post 2015, the paper will present a critical review of the suggestions for education goals and targets currently in the public domain, including those put forward by the High Level Panel report, the Commonwealth Education Ministers, and a number of commentators from the academic and NGO communities. It will present criteria for engaging with questions of relevance, equity and intersectorality, which appear key to the process of selecting education goals and targets for transforming learning and teaching beyond 2015.

Kazuo Kuroda, Waseda University

The presentation revisits various concepts of quality, equity and inclusion in education and tries to identify the possible indicators to monitor the progress of this important aspect in the post 2015 education agenda. The proposed methodology consists of using a rubric, which has been uniquely developed by JICA Research Institute (Kazuo KURODA, Makiko HAYASHI and Takako YUKI) as part of an original pilot activity in an attempt to contribute to the SABER (Systems Approach for Better Education Results). SABER is an initiative currently being developed by the World Bank along with partners around the world that helps countries systematically examine and strengthen the performance of their education systems to achieve learning for all. Utilizing this SABER framework, this presentation will specifically show the possibilities of evidence-based categorical process benchmarks of education policies as indicators for the post EFA/MDGs framework, determining and comparing the levels of policy commitment of national governments in achieving quality, equity and inclusion for marginalized children. The usage of such indicators will allow us to see educational policies in the targeted countries by identifying and visibly recognizing policy gaps among different kinds of disadvantages and different kinds of quality and equity concepts.