Regional Seminar on Public-Private Partnerships in Higher Education & TVET and Youth Employment

30-31 July 2012
Novotel Bangkok Fenix Ploenchit, Bangkok, Thailand

Information Note

In 2009, UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education established the Education Research Institutes Network (ERI-Net) to encourage and facilitate regional cooperation in conducting analytical and rigorous research on topical education issues that are of particular relevance to the Asia-Pacific region. The findings from the studies will provide a wide knowledge base to assist governments in formulating appropriate and sound educational policies leading to positive practices and long-term impact.

As its first task, ERI-Net examined the impact of the global economic and financial crisis on higher education in 2009. This was followed, in 2010, by a study on the international mobility of students. At a seminar held in March 2011, researchers and policy-makers from 12 countries shared experiences and lessons learnt on cross-border higher education. In addition, the participants agreed on two new topics for research (see below) and developed the research frameworks for these studies.

Theme 1: Public-private partnerships (PPP) in higher education and technical vocational education and training (TVET)

Through international efforts such as the MDG and EFA initiatives, many countries have made substantial progress towards achieving universal primary education. At the same time, policy makers and educators have increasingly recognized the need to further develop secondary and post-secondary education. With rapid social and economic development in Asia and the Pacific, the demand for skilled human resources has been increasing. Due to limited public resources, however, a number of countries face many challenges in increasing access to quality education, especially beyond the basic education level. Partnerships between the public and private sectors are seen as one of the responses to these challenges.

Within this theme, research studies will identify the various types of public-private partnerships in higher education and TVET available in the researchers’ respective countries and highlight the key features of the partnerships and strategies that have been developed to overcome the challenges. The experience and lessons learned will be valuable for governments, educational institutions and the private sector alike. They will help to promote partnerships to improve access, equity and quality of education and training at the post-secondary level.
Theme 2: The Question of Youth Employment: Innovative Approaches to Human Resource Development

Youth unemployment has become a major global issue following the financial crisis in 2008. The current economic instability has further aggravated young people's concerns about their future. According to the ILO's 2010 Global Employment Trends for Youth report, young people are almost three times more likely to be unemployed compared with adults. Experts warn that youth who have difficulties finding jobs or who are forced to work under poor conditions could become "the lost generation" in the future. Since youth unemployment incurs a burden on both the economy and society, various interventions have been designed and implemented to address this problem, including the vocationalization of post-basic education programmes, subsidies to employers for recruiting youth and improved job placement service in schools, etc. In addition, governments have taken steps to promote entrepreneurship and to encourage cooperation between education institutions and employers.

The studies will identify innovative approaches to address youth employment issues in the countries of the region, and produce policy recommendations for UNESCO Member States on practical ways to help young people enter and integrate into the world of work.

Objectives of the seminar

UNESCO Bangkok is organizing a regional seminar for the researchers of the two themes to share the preliminary findings of the studies they have conducted as well explore topics for future studies. While the ERI-Net has successfully facilitated knowledge generation and dissemination among the higher education community, ERI-Net members also recognized that educational issues should be examined from a more holistic perspective to include other sub-sectors. A comprehensive sector-wide approach would be more effective in identifying and analyzing problems, as well as in formulating recommendations to address existing and emerging issues. In this context, UNESCO proposes to expand the scope of research for ERI-Net to go beyond higher education.

At the 2012 seminar, the future strategic directions of ERI-Net will be discussed. More specifically, the seminar will aim to:

- Present the findings of research and case studies for discussion between policy makers and researchers and consider how to address the issues identified in the studies;
- Explore ways to reflect the findings of these studies in policy, planning and management of higher education in the respective countries;
- Discuss future strategies and directions of ERI-Net studies; and
- Discuss potential topics of studies for 2012/2013.

Expected outputs

- Agreement on follow-up activities to finalize the case studies on public-private partnerships in higher education, TVET and youth employment;
- Preparation of the outlines of synthesis reports on the two themes;
- Agreement on the expanded scope of ERI-Net and its strategic directions; and
- Agreement on the research theme and guidelines of the next study.

Potential participants
Researchers from education institutions and think tanks in the region;
Education policy-makers and government officials;
Representatives from international organizations and educational institutions.

Given the expanded scope of ERI-Net, it is strongly recommended that each participating institute includes additional participant(s) with other areas of expertise (e.g., curriculum, assessment, planning).

**Venue and Dates**
30-31 July 2012, Bangkok, Thailand

**Provisional programme**

1st day
- Opening and welcome
- Session I: Presentations on public-private partnerships in higher education and TVET
  - Session II: Presentations on youth employment

2nd day
- Session II: Presentations on youth employment (cont’d)
- Discussion on the future strategic direction and research areas of ERI-Net
- Closing

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