2013 ERI-Net Annual Meeting: Transition to a better and higher learning

17-19 October 2013
Bangkok Marriott Hotel Sukhumvit Bangkok, Thailand

Concept Note (draft, 21 Aug. 2013)

The Education Research Institutes Network in the Asia-Pacific (ERI-Net), established in 2009 by UNESCO Bangkok, Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, aims to encourage and facilitate regional collaboration among education research institutions in conducting research work on education issues that are particularly pertinent to the Asia-Pacific region. Currently, 23 institutions from 16 countries and economies participate in this network.

Since 2009, the network has facilitated knowledge generation and dissemination primarily in the fields of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and higher education. In line with ERI-Net's inaugural statement to gradually expand its scope of research beyond TVET and higher education, a decision was made in the 2012 ERI-Net annual meeting to promote collaborative research for the entire education system.

The two research topics agreed for 2013 are: (1) integration of transversal/non-cognitive skills development in education policy and practice and (2) the transition from secondary education to higher education. Several institutions have been providing technical and financial support to help facilitate the research on these two topics based on their respective interests. The Republic of Korea Funds-in-Trust (K-FIT) has been supporting the research on the transition from secondary education to higher education in particular, while the research on transversal skills development is being undertaken in partnership with the Tokyo Institute of Technology with support from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) of Japan and the Korea Institute of Curriculum and Evaluation (KICE).

As agreed upon at the expert meeting on 7-8 March in 2013, when the research frameworks for the two topics were finalised, UNESCO Bangkok is organising the 2013 ERI-Net annual meeting on 17-19 October 2013. The meeting aims to share preliminary findings of the case studies conducted by participating institutions with a view to finalise the case study reports by the end of this year. The background notes of the researches are briefly presented as follows.

Theme 1: Integration of transversal/21st century/non-cognitive skills in education policies and practices

While academic performance of students has been improving over the past decade in many countries of the region, there has been a growing concern over the trends of education systems focusing on the accumulation of academic “cognitive” skills at the expense of other dimensions of learning. Indeed, the critical importance of what is often referred to as “non-cognitive skills”², “21st century skills” or

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¹The last day (19 October) will be devoted to the ERI-Net Steering Group meeting on the work plan for 2014, as well as the discussion on the 2014 research study.
²The term “non-cognitive skills” is tentatively used in the absence of a shared agreement on a more suitable term to describe these “skills” (broadly defined here to encompass skills, competencies, values and attitudes). While “cognitive” skills refer to academic learning measured by conventional assessment methods, “non-cognitive” skills refer to other skills and competencies often not measured but required for the holistic development of learners.
“transversal skills” has been frequently highlighted on many occasions, such as the regional high-level expert meetings on education and learning beyond 2015 (May and November 2012 in Bangkok, Thailand). These meetings called on Member States to pay more attention to the cultivation of transversal skills so that future generations can live responsible, decent and meaningful lives in a rapidly changing world.

Asia and the Pacific region have many valuable experiences in integrating transversal/non-cognitive skills and competencies into education reform initiatives which should be documented and consolidated for wider dissemination to benefit more countries within and beyond the region. In this context, ERI-Net members have addressed this need through country case studies on non-cognitive/traversal skills following a common research framework. The focus of Phase I of this research exercise is to examine how different countries in the region define and apply transversal/non-cognitive skills in their education policies and practices, as well as identify emerging trends and challenges. Further research on this topic is being considered, in partnership with the Tokyo Institute of Technology, to consolidate the national inputs from the case studies and scale them up for regional adaptation and application.

**Theme 2: The transition from secondary education to higher education**

In past decades, higher education in the Asia and Pacific region has undergone a number of significant changes. In particular, a sharp increase in the demand for higher education has triggered a rapid “massification” process in many countries. As a result, higher education systems are moving from being based on small-scale and elite models of learning, to large, popularised education models. At the same time, the region has also seen an increasing involvement of non-state and non-traditional providers in higher education, which have widened the field of higher education to include multiple and diverse forms of learning, including TVET and professional training.

These emerging trends demand a rethinking of the ways students are selected to enter higher education institutions (HEIs) and their impact on the provision of secondary education. To date, great efforts have been made by many Asia-Pacific countries to reconsider and reorganise their college and university admission systems in order to better respond to the increase in demand for higher education and diversity of HEIs. In this context, ERI-Net members have been conducting research on current higher education admission policies (criteria and procedures) and their impact on the provision of secondary education through country case studies.

**Objectives of the meeting**

1. Share the main findings of the case studies on the two ERI-NET 2013 research topics;
2. Explore ways to refine the case reports for e-publications;
3. Establish the ERI-Net Steering Group and define its roles, responsibilities and modality of activities; and
4. Discuss and finalise topics for ERI-Net 2014 research study.

UNESCO Bangkok proposes to include the term “transversal” to show the cross-cutting nature of these skills, competencies, and values.
Expected outcomes

1. Case study reports presented and commented for further revision;
2. Follow-up activities to finalise the case study reports;
3. ERI-Net Steering Group established with clear terms of reference; and
4. Topics for ERI-Net 2014 research study finalised.

Provisional Programme

Day 1
- Opening and welcoming remarks
- Session I: Presentations of case studies on integration of transversal/21st century/non-cognitive skills in education policies and practices (Q&A after each presentation)
- Plenary discussion on policy recommendations
- Wrap-up of Day 1

Day 2
- Session II: Presentations of case studies on the transition from secondary education to higher education (Q&A after each presentation)
- Plenary discussion on policy recommendations
- Establishment of the ERI-net Steering Group
- Wrap-up of Day 2

Day 3
- First meeting of the ERI-Net Steering Group
- Plenary discussion on the topics for ERI-Net 2014 research studies
- Closing remarks

For further information about the meeting, please contact:

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