1. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The Education for All (EFA) movement in the past decade has been instrumental in providing many children of school-age in the Asia-Pacific region an improved access to education. This is undoubtedly a great progress, yet enrolment in schools does not necessarily equate to learning. The quality of education has become a major concern of national and international discourses on education and will be a key topic of discussion in a number of forthcoming education conferences and meetings, including the Global Education for All Meeting (GEM) in June 2014 and the Asia-Pacific Regional Education Conference in August 2014. These events will discuss quality teaching and learning among other issues and feed into the formation of the post-2015 education agenda through the World Education Forum 2015, Incheon, Republic of Korea.

As the focus of the post-2015 education agenda shifts towards equitable access to quality learning, teachers are now in the increasing limelight of policy making as they form the ‘front-line’ of quality education. There is a vast body of research that confirms that teachers are the main change agents for quality education such as the 2011 TIMSS report indicating that the better the teacher quality (i.e., teacher effectiveness), the less the incidence of low achievement. A number of countries worldwide, including in the Asia-Pacific region, have been trying to define teacher quality not only in terms of inputs of teacher-related “ingredients” but more increasingly in terms of teacher effectiveness. Ensuring the teacher effectiveness, i.e., the capacity, motivation and professionalism of the teaching force, has a decisive effect on student learning and learning outcomes. While cognizant of the worldwide shortage of teachers, in the future it is important to think more of how the current pool of teachers could be better empowered to improve their effectiveness and maximize their impact on student learning.

In the Asia-Pacific region, the available data and information on teacher effectiveness are still scattered and incomplete and do not allow for robust and evidence-based policymaking. A few international initiatives, including OECD’s Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), World Bank’s Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER), UIS data on global teacher shortages provide some cross-country teacher data and analysis on teacher policies and practices in selected countries of the region. With diverse experiences providing a wide range of perspectives, countries of the region have a tremendous potential to learn from each other and synergize efforts towards strengthening teacher policies to ensure teacher effectiveness.

There is a need to take into consideration many complex factors related to the policy and school environment in which teachers operate and are evaluated. For example, “for teachers to achieve their potential, they need the support of curriculum reforms and assessments that can help them to improve their teaching practice”.¹ Teacher assessment reforms influence not only the outcomes of

learning but also the improvement of teachers’ capabilities. Nevertheless, teacher evaluations often do not represent important features of capacity building. A comprehensive teacher evaluation system should “provide support for supervision and professional learning, identify teachers who need additional assistance and – in some cases – a change of career, and recognize expert teachers who can contribute to the learning of their peers”.  

Another important area for consideration in teacher effectiveness is the discourse of transversal/transferable competencies. Many countries in the Asia-Pacific region are increasingly emphasizing the importance of transversal competencies in education policy and practice so as to improve teaching methods and enable students to develop in a more holistic manner. This requires building an understanding of how transversal skills and competencies can be better embedded in teacher preparation, support and evaluation. On-going research projects from UNESCO confirmed that most education systems recognize the importance of holistic learning and skills in their policies and curriculum, but there is an important gap between education policy intent and teaching practice in every country and that effective implementation remains difficult at classroom level.

In this context, UNESCO Bangkok and the Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI) will hold a seminar to stimulate policy dialogue, informed by research, on teacher effectiveness with the eventual aim to empower teachers for quality learning in the Asia-Pacific. The seminar will discuss teacher policies in countries of the region and international cooperation to improve teacher effectiveness, focusing on strategies to ensure and evaluate teacher effectiveness, including integration of transversal competencies.

2. OBJECTIVES

- To facilitate the sharing of experiences and lessons on teacher policies and international cooperation to strengthen teacher effectiveness.
- Facilitated by diverse research undertakings and country studies, to take stock of emerging issues and innovative solutions aiming at improving teacher effectiveness through better use of teacher evaluation and integration of teaching of transversal competencies.
- To discuss a framework for holistic teacher evaluation systems, including teaching of transversal competencies
- To formulate the common issues and recommendations on teacher effectiveness for the consideration at the upcoming conferences on the post-2015 education agenda (e.g. the Regional Education Conference and the World Education Forum).

3. PROPOSED THEMES/SESSIONS

- **Session I.** Stock-taking of different international and regional initiatives on teacher policies and practices (e.g., joint data collection and research endeavours, regional/international policy dialogues, ODA to the Asia-Pacific as well as from within the region, South-South cooperation, potential of the private sector).

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3 The term “transversal competencies” is used in the absence of a shared agreement on a more suitable term to describe the set of “skills” (as well competencies, values and attitudes), which are often called non-cognitive, 21st century or higher-order skills. These skills and competencies often not measured but required for the holistic development of learners include a range of critical and innovative thinking, interpersonal skills, intrapersonal skills, global citizenship competencies, and media and information literacy.

• **Session 2.** Emerging research and country reports on teacher effectiveness and evaluation through an exploration of diverse factors (e.g., supporting environment for teachers to be effective, improving teacher performance and motivation, promoting examples of good teaching, providing support for supervision and professional learning, identifying teachers who need additional assistance and career change, recognizing expert teachers who can contribute to peer learning, addressing skills and competencies required for teachers to be effective in the classroom).

• **Session 3.** Developing solutions on strengthening international and regional cooperation in teacher effectiveness and evaluation (including an analytical framework for assessing teacher effectiveness).

4. **PARTICIPANTS**

• Experts, policy analysts and researchers from KEDI and UNESCO Bangkok

• Representatives from international, regional and sub-regional organisations/networks/bodies working on teacher issues

• Country participants: A total of 25 participants will be invited from a range of Asia-Pacific countries, with balanced representation across sub-regions. Each country will be represented by at least one participant who is either (i) a senior government official involved in relevant aspects of teacher policies; or (ii) a senior researcher from relevant research institutes and/or universities

5. **DATES AND VENUE**

• Dates: 4th and 5th August 2014

• Venue: Bangkok, Thailand (Ballroom B, 2nd floor, Bangkok Marriott Hotel Sukhumvit)

6. **WORKING METHODS AND DOCUMENTS**

Preparation for the seminar will be undertaken by UNESCO’s Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau for Education (UNESCO Bangkok), Education Policy and Reform Unit, and the Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI), Office of International Relations and Cooperation, which are co-organisers of the seminar.

The language of the seminar is English. The seminar sessions will be organized around the proposed topics, the results of which will contribute to the achievement of its stated objectives as well as to a potential publication. Discussion and exchange of experiences among the participants will be highly participatory drawing on the country specific experiences of the participants as well as the practices and perspectives of the international, regional and sub-regional organisations/networks/bodies.

The working documents to facilitate the discussion include:

• Background paper on importance of teachers in the quality of education and teacher evaluation in monitoring teacher effectiveness and improving teacher/teaching quality (KEDI)

• Background paper on teaching and learning practices, including teaching of transversal skills, and international and regional cooperation on teacher effectiveness (UNESCO Bangkok)

• Reports by country representatives, researchers and institutions
7. FUNDING AND ORGANIZATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

The seminar is co-financed by KEDI and UNESCO Bangkok. Participants from some selected low-income countries will be financed through these funds. Participants from middle- to high-income countries and other interested persons representing international, regional and sub-regional organizations, UNESCO Field Offices, and development agencies and private sector should seek funding from their own or other sources. Participants with special requests or requiring further clarification should contact the event organizers directly.

8. CONTACT PERSONS

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