CONCEPT NOTE

Background

In May 2015, the international community gathered in Incheon, Republic of Korea, to renew its commitment to education. The ambitious and aspiring Education 2030 agenda was adopted, calling for all countries to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” by 2030 (Incheon Declaration). Education 2030 was enshrined as Goal 4 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted in September 2015 in New York.

Compared to the previous global agenda for education, Education for All (EFA), SDG4/Education 2030 emphasizes the importance of equity of learning and evidence-based policy formulation. Research on implementation is considered as a key component to achieving quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all. The Education 2030 Framework for Action calls on the research community to contribute in education development in general and policy dialogue in particular, through:

1. Developing policy-relevant research, including action research, to facilitate the achievement of the targets, and make knowledge on education available in a usable form for policy-makers;
2. Developing local and national sustainable capacity for qualitative and quantitative research; and
3. Helping chart progress, propose options or solutions and identify best practices that are innovative, scalable and transferable.

Furthermore, research is at the center of monitoring, follow-up and review of evidence-based policies for achieving SDG4/Education2030 to ensure effective evidence-based and result-oriented programmes.

In 2009, representatives of the research community in the Asia-Pacific region agreed on the urgent need for a regional network of educational research institutes under the auspices of UNESCO with the aim to provide a cross-national platform for collaboration in education research to address policy issues that are pertinent and/or emerging in the region. In response to these needs, the Asia-Pacific Education Research Institutes Network (ERI-Net) was founded as a regional collaborative research network led by the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau for Education (UNESCO Bangkok).

ERI-Net takes a sector-wide perspective – the research scope includes all education sectors from primary education to higher education and TVET which enables ERI-Net to effectively respond to the demand of SDG4/Education 2030 whose core value is holistic and lifelong learning. Given its wide regional network, ERI-Net can serve as a platform for the research community to unpack SDG4/Education 2030 as well as to provide evidence-based advice to implement the Education 2030 Framework for Action. Despite its potential, however, ERI-Net activities in the past were limited to small-scale regional studies on specific topics and relatively weak link to policy-making processes.

Since adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015, countries have embarked on implementation of the agenda. However, there is a significant need for conceptual clarification, translating concepts to policies, and monitoring progress. It is crucial for ERI-Net to reinvent itself and respond to these emerging needs by harnessing the power of research to achieve SDG4/Education 2030. Given the aim to better understand and contextualize SDG4 and its targets, UNESCO Bangkok will launch a regional consultation with government-affiliated education research institutions to
identify national-level needs, mobilize resources, and help shape the research agenda for SDG4 in Asia and the Pacific. This includes networking with like-minded research institutions and building national and regional capacity to address urgent policy concerns related to SDG4 implementation.

Objectives of the Meeting

1. To build a common understanding among the research community in the Asia-Pacific region of SDG4/Education 2030 and its corresponding targets, and the Framework for Action
2. To share information on recent trends in education policy research in the region
3. To identify crucial knowledge gaps that can be filled by collaborative research
4. To agree on a framework of collaboration under ERI-Net

Expected Outputs of the Meeting

1. Revised Terms of Reference of ERI-Net
2. Action plan on areas of collaboration for ERI-Net research to support implementation of SDG4/Education 2030

Agenda

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<tr>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>Thursday, 24 November</th>
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| AM    | - What is SDG4? Unpacking SDG4 and what has been done at the global, regional, and national levels  
|       | - Trends in education policy research in Asia-Pacific (presentations by selected institutes) |
| PM    | Knowledge gaps and potential contribution of research (1)  
|       | - Equity  
|       | - Relevance of learning (including Global Citizenship Education) |

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<th>Day 2</th>
<th>Friday, 25 November</th>
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| AM    | Knowledge gaps and potential contribution of research (2)  
|       | - Lifelong learning (i.e., policy coherence, qualifications framework)  
|       | - Monitoring progress towards SDG4 |
| PM    | Next steps  
|       | - Action planning |

Participants

1. UNESCO and Thematic Working Group (TWG) Education 2030+ members
2. Representatives of government-affiliated policy research institutions with education sector-wide coverage
3. Resource persons – selected members from the current ERI-Net

Resource persons

- Professor Mark Bray, Chair Professor, UNESCO Chair Professor in Comparative Education, President, Comparative & International Education Society, Director, Comparative Education Research Centre, Division of Policy, Administration and Social Sciences Education, University of Hong Kong
- Professor Kai Ming Cheng, Emeritus Professor Division of Policy, Administration and Social Sciences Education, University of Hong Kong
ERI-Net Regional Expert Meeting on Harnessing the Power of Research to Achieve SDG4 – Education 2030
24-25 November 2016 (Bangkok, Thailand)

- Dr. Ethel Valenzuela, Deputy Director of Programme and Development, Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO)

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