Harmony, understanding touted as key part of learning

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Unesco’s “Learning to live together” concept should be adopted by education policymakers to foster mutual understanding and harmony in a conflict-plagued world, an international forum on education has been told.

Kim Gwang-jo, director of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation’s Asia and Pacific Bureau for Education, said the Asia-Pacific region is diverse with more than 4.2 billion people representing 60% of the world’s population.

"Inevitably, there are disagreements, tensions and conflicts in an array of political, economic, social and environmental dimensions to humanity," he told the three-day education conference in Bangkok yesterday.

The conference, which was attended by around 300 participants from 30 countries, was organised by Unesco and the Asia-Pacific Programme of Educational Innovation for Development under the theme "The Heart of Education: Learning to Live Together". It concluded yesterday.

According to Unesco, the concept of learning to live together is centred on the development of understanding, consideration and respect for others, their beliefs, values and cultures.

The concept, which is now central to Unesco’s mission, also recognises difference and diversity as an opportunity rather than a danger and as a valuable resource to be used for the common good.

"We need to try our best to embed the concept of learning to live together in all aspects of education and we will be able to develop more effective solutions to manage and minimise conflicts," Mr Kim said.

He noted people in the education sector have tried to promote skills and literacy which could lead people to get obsessed with competitiveness.

"We all know that education should be more than just competitiveness as we see many challenges like climate change, diseases, environmental challenges and disasters, so we need to face these challenges together," he said.

Panita Kambhu na Ayutthaya, permanent secretary of the Education Ministry, said the ministry has been working with the Culture Ministry and Sliapakorn University to include lessons about our neighbours’ history in courses taught to students.

"Diversity is beautiful and for us to live together in harmony, we have to learn each other’s history, culture and traditions, starting with our neighbours," she said.

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