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Report on the Joint UNESCO and UNICEF Regional Workshop on

EQUIVALENCY PROGRAMMES AND ALTERNATIVE CERTIFIED LEARNING

Achieving Education for All and Promoting Lifelong Learning



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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Despite significant progress, the Asia-Pacific region still faces challenges in achieving the six Education for All (EFA) goals by 2015. Across the region, over 27 million children remain out of school and approximately 500 million adults are illiterate, many of whom are women and girls and people from other marginalized groups. In order to achieve the EFA goals and meet the education needs of the unreached, it is becoming increasingly evident that a variety of learning channels are needed, including alternative models of delivery.

With traditional formal schools unable to meet the learning needs of all children and youth in the region, Equivalency Programmes (EPs)¹ offer critical and, often the only, opportunities for learning, particularly for marginalized groups. EPs are, ideally, alternative education programmes that provide a quality of learning that is equivalent to the formal system, and provide skills and competencies that are recognized as being equivalent to those acquired through the formal system. EPs are offered to different age groups, at various levels of education, from primary to lifelong learning; reaching groups such as marginalized communities of ethnic and linguistic minorities, rural and urban poor, girls and school drop-outs.

EPs are often delivered through non-formal education (NFE) systems, but alternative delivery programmes within formal education systems can also offer promising pathways to accessing education. Creation of synergies between formal and non-formal education is needed, so that progression through levels of education, and transfer between formal and non-formal programmes, is possible.

Many countries in the Asia-Pacific region have yet to develop a systematic approach to coordinating equivalency mechanisms for basic and continuing education. Although several countries in the region have equivalency policies and EP frameworks, implementation often focuses only on particular levels (e.g. non-formal secondary education), or requires additional coordination among implementing partners. As a result, equivalency training and assessments can vary and, consequently, the knowledge, skills and competencies fostered can differ substantially from formal education and from labour market requirements.

1.2 The Objectives of the Workshop

In light of the growing need for alternative pathways to education, UNESCO and UNICEF conducted a Joint Regional Workshop on Equivalency Programmes and Alternative Certified Learning for Achieving EFA and Promoting Lifelong Learning in Bangkok,

¹ An Equivalency Programme (EP) is as an alternative form of education to formal education that provides learning opportunities of comparable quality and is recognized with official certification.

Thailand, from 13 to 17 September 2010. The Workshop aimed to provide countries in the Asia-Pacific region with a platform for sharing knowledge and lessons on EP, as part of an overall effort to accelerate progress towards achieving the EFA goals.

Specifically, the workshop had the following objectives:

- To review the current status of EPs in countries in the region and the lessons from those countries.
- To identify key issues, challenges and opportunities in the effort to develop or enhance EPs, with particular emphasis on a range of options on policies; curriculum, teacher development and delivery mechanisms; and evaluation of equivalency programmes.
- To identify strategic priorities and action points, as well as synergies between formal and non-formal education related to high quality EPs, particularly those serving out of school children and illiterate adults.

In preparation for the workshop, each participating country formed a team of government experts to carry out a basic country review and compile a report on the overall status of EPs and key issues and challenges related to EPs and Alternative Certified Learning (ACL) in their country. The country reports also articulated the priority learning needs of each country, which served as a useful resource and guidance for discussions throughout the workshop.

This report is a summary of main issues and discussions from the workshop. It is intended to serve as a resource for policy makers and development partners from the participating countries and beyond, to better understand the key issues and challenges related to developing and implementing EPs and alternative delivery models.²

2. Summary of Discussions

2.1 Introduction

In opening the workshop, Gwang-Jo Kim, Director of the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in Asia and the Pacific, and Festo Kavishe, the Deputy Regional Director for the UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office (EAPRO), noted the critical importance of effective, high quality EPs and alternative learning opportunities as part of the overall effort to reach the Education for All goals by 2015.

² All resources from the workshop, including background documents and presentations, are available upon request to: appeal.bgk@unesco.org

As a whole, they observed, the Asia-Pacific region has made remarkable progress in fulfilling the basic right to quality education, with more and more children and youth enrolling in schools, and semi-illiterate or illiterate persons attending learning programmes. Yet, they noted, this overall progress is not enjoyed by all, with continued marginalization of many population groups from good quality learning opportunities. Overall, improvements in access and quality have benefited some, while excluding others, particularly poor and disadvantaged groups such as working youth, migrants and ethnic minorities.

Achieving the Education for All goals necessarily requires reaching the marginalized. Likewise, without equity, the aspirations for human rights and development articulated in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) cannot be fulfilled. The urgent need to improve and accelerate efforts to reaching the marginalized is evident, as nations around the world prepare for the 2010 MDG Summit to assess and strategize actions towards reaching the targets by 2015.

Mr. Kim expressed UNESCO's commitment to supporting the development of EPs and ACL strategies as part of efforts towards achieving the EFA goals and promoting lifelong learning. He noted that, following the publication in 2006 of a study of EPs in selected countries in the region, the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Programme of Education for All (APPEAL) continues to make significant contributions to knowledge sharing and practice of EPs across the Asia-Pacific region.³ Mr. Kim explained that in 2009 UNESCO sponsored two regional workshops on EPs, which provided countries in the region with opportunities to share their experiences, identify ways in which the EPs can be further improved, learn good practices and examine case studies from the participating countries. He also announced that UNESCO will publish the Regional Guidelines for EPs in Asia Pacific in the coming months, which will support countries in the region to further develop and improve their EPs.

Mr. Kavishe expressed UNICEF's continued support of countries of the region in addressing the diverse challenges they face in achieving education for all, through UNICEF's efforts in collecting evidence, exploring relevant and effective initiatives, and promoting positive policy change. He noted that two major studies on EPs and alternative learning were commissioned in 2009 in both the East Asia and Pacific, and the South Asia regions, providing a solid knowledge base to take stock of the current status of EPs and alternative learning systems across the Asia-Pacific region.⁴ He further noted that UNICEF's Adolescent Education Strategy for the East Asia and Pacific region identifies a critical need for recognizing the roots of marginalization faced by many adolescents in accessing good quality education. Mr. Kavishe emphasized that UNICEF's

3 UNESCO. 2006. Equivalency Programmes (EPs) for Promoting Lifelong Learning, Bangkok, UNESCO. <http://www2.unescobkk.org/elib/publications/096/>

4 UNICEF. 2010. Education for adolescents, Bangkok, UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Office. http://www.unicef.org/eapro/Education_for_Adolescents_strategy_framework.pdf. UNICEF and Cambridge Distance Education Consultancy. 2009. Open and distance learning for basic education in South Asia, Bangkok, Kathmandu, UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia. [http://www.unicef.org/rosa/ODL_Country_Report_\(Final_version\)___10_Dec_09.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/rosa/ODL_Country_Report_(Final_version)___10_Dec_09.pdf)

Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children will make key recommendations regarding reaching such disadvantaged groups, and he noted that continued collaboration with partners through the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI), for improved gender equity in education, and through the Language, Education and MDGs Conference, for ensuring the right to mother-tongue based learning and development, are also part of UNICEF's efforts to reach the marginalized.

Mr. Kavishe explained that the joint workshop was an extension of these efforts and a timely occasion to explore one of the most effective means of reaching the marginalized. He noted that alternative delivery and non-formal education, using innovative programmes and practices, offer critical pathways for disadvantaged children to enjoy the same quality of learning opportunities accessed by children in the formal education system. He emphasized that accreditation and certification of non-formal education are essential to recognition of learning achievements, as well as for ensuring smooth transition from non-formal to formal education. Mr. Kavishe noted that even though many programmes are ongoing in a number of countries, systematic and coherent approaches to EPs are needed, with clear linkages established between traditional, formal delivery and non-formal education sectors for improved synergy and better overall impact.

Mr. Kavishe explained to the participants that the workshop brings together not only key government representatives but also partners in the private and non-State sector, whose collective knowledge and insight can add to our resource base and support our agenda in non-formal education. He noted that the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in non-formal education can unleash a wealth of innovative methods for teaching, learning and assessment. Mr. Kavishe pointed out that countries with strong equivalency programmes, such as Indonesia and Thailand, can provide many valuable lessons as countries of the region plan and implement their respective programmes. Evidence-based and informed policies, and strengthened partnerships – between the public and private sectors, and among countries – will help in steering countries of the region towards identifying the best strategies to ensure the poor and vulnerable have access to education.

Mr. Kim and Mr. Kavishe concluded by applauding the progress countries of the region are making towards reaching the EFA goals and MDGs and reiterated the firm commitment of the United Nations in supporting countries in their common endeavour to reach the marginalized and meet the targets for 2015.

2.2 Equivalency Programme Policies

This session provided an overview of trends and innovations in policies related to EP and ACL in the Asia-Pacific region. For this session, the UNESCO and UNICEF regional reports about EP formed a solid foundation of knowledge on which to base a review of the current status and approaches to EP in the region.

2.2.1 Overview and Trends

Kimberly Parekh (Consultant) made a presentation on the basic concepts relating to EP, including its background, purpose and main beneficiaries, and the various management approaches.⁵

According to Ms. Parekh, non-formal education is now an integral part of many education systems in the region, but its rationale and targets have evolved over time. What was once mainly a means to develop literacy and skills, primarily for the rural communities in the 1960's, has become a channel to serve a variety of purposes and needs, depending on the context and educational goals of countries. Some countries, such as Indonesia, Mongolia and Thailand, articulate EPs from a rights-based approach to education, with legislation requiring non-formal education qualifications to be equivalent to those gained through the formal education system. In other countries, non-formal education is perceived as a way to enable individuals to gain a higher set of skills and competencies and thereby participate effectively in the market economy and have a higher standard of living. Yet other countries see non-formal education as a way of improving the quality of life of out-of-school youth or adults who cannot re-enter formal schooling. For these people, equivalency programmes offer opportunities to learn life skills such as health and nutrition, civic participation and legal rights.

Thus, Ms. Parekh explained, non-formal education programmes have a wide variety of purposes and targets, and vary depending on the political, socioeconomic and cultural context in which they are delivered. EPs targeting out-of-school children (aged between 6 and 14) might aim to integrate children back into primary and secondary schools, while EPs targeting out-of-school youth (aged between 15 and 24) and adults might aim to integrate learners into vocational education or higher and continuing education and better employment prospects.

Ms. Parekh explained that policies for EPs aim to establish procedures and processes that legitimize learning that takes place outside of the formal education system. Policy provisions can differ depending on whether the EP programme is a "second chance" for education via terminal degrees or an opportunity for re-entry into formal schooling. Countries such as India, Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand have fairly advanced education equivalency policies, and it would be instructive to review and learn from the impact of EPs in these countries.

Ms. Parekh noted that EPs are often managed in the same manner as formal education. In countries that have centralized education systems, for example, delivery of EPs may be coordinated by a non-formal education department, whether it is through certification of programmes or accreditation of government and non-governmental bodies associated with delivering or approving curriculum standards, instruction

⁵ Ms. Parekh's presentation was largely based on her paper: Parekh, K. 2009. "Nonformal Education Equivalency: Understanding the Historical Development of Equivalency, Analyzing Select Equivalency Policy and Practice in Southeast Asia, and Proposing Implications for Supporting Equivalency Programmes". Unpublished. 15 June 2009.

and assessment processes. Increasingly, however, alternative delivery programmes are managed by basic education and secondary education departments in order to enhance access to, and quality of, education for hard-to-reach groups.

Countries with decentralized education systems allow governing bodies (at the national, district or community levels) to have greater autonomy in coordinating the delivery of education equivalency programmes. In such countries, local bodies may have greater influence over certain aspects of the programmes, such as curriculum and instruction, but these countries also require strong local capacity to manage the programmes and corresponding accountability measures.

2.2.2 Equivalency Programme Policy in Indonesia: A Snapshot of Development

Usman Syihab (Lecturer, State Islamic University, Indonesia) presented a summary of policy development for EPs in Indonesia.

According to Mr. Syihab, Equivalency Education in Indonesia is designed for the school-aged population, for those who cannot enter formal education due to monetary, time, geographical, social, legal and cultural constraints. In Indonesia, EPs have been supported by a series of laws and policies between 1945 and the present. Those developments are summarized in the table below.

Table: Summary of the laws and policies supporting EPs in Indonesia, 1945-2010

Period	Highlights
Early Post-Independence Period (1945-1965)	During this period, the focus of EP policy was on combating illiteracy. In 1951, two years after the establishment of the Department of Community Education, the government launched the "Ten years community education plan", designed to eliminate illiteracy within 10 years. In 1960, the President issued a mandate - <i>Komando Presiden</i> - to eliminate illiteracy by the end of 1964, and non-formal education was integral to this plan.
Between 1966 and 1970	The focus of EP remained on combating illiteracy but emphasized functional literacy rather than conventional literacy. The main target group was illiterate workers employed in the various economic sectors. The objective was to improve literacy among workers so as to increase their productivity.
Between 1970 and 1990	The policy still aimed to combat illiteracy, but supported a new model for eliminating illiteracy. The programmes exposed learners to knowledge of their immediate surroundings and interactions in their daily life, in their family and social life, and people in their environment.
Between 1991 and 2004	The policy moved away from supporting EPs which aimed to combat illiteracy and focused instead on legalizing the status of three non-formal education packages: Package A (equivalent to Primary School), Package B (equivalent to Junior Secondary School) and Package C (equivalent to Senior Secondary School).

Between 2005 and 2008	Three aspects were emphasized in policy making: a) Improving access to education to enable children to complete nine years of compulsory basic education, b) improving the quality, relevance and competitiveness of equivalency programmes, and c) enhancing management, accountability and the public image of equivalency education services. In 2005, Regulation Number 13 endorsed the establishment of the Directorate of Equivalency Education under the General Directorate of Out of School Education, in the Ministry of National Education.
Between 2009 and 2010	The Directorate of Equivalency Education introduced a new policy on three types of Equivalence Education. This new policy aimed to ensure EPs met learners' needs in terms of intellectual and vocational competence and livelihoods. The three types of EPs were: Pure Academic Equivalency Education (80 percent academic and 20 percent vocational skills); Integrated Academic-Vocation Equivalency (50 percent academic and 50 percent vocational skills); and Pure Vocation Equivalency (20 percent academic and 80 percent vocational skills). In 2010, this new policy was promulgated and published in the Guidelines on implementation of equivalency education. The Directorate is preparing a standard curriculum structure and contents for EPs, along with related implementation guidelines. It is critical, however, that the implementation of the policy be complemented by the restructuring of the final examination subjects in both formal and non-formal education.

2.2.3 Open and Distance Learning: Implications for Policy and Planning

Ros Morpeth (Research Associate, University of Cambridge) shared perspectives on the relevance of equivalency programmes in the context of Open and Distance Learning (ODL), an umbrella term referring to education approaches that “reach learners in places that are convenient or accessible to them, provide learning resources for them, or enable them to qualify without attending school or college in person, or open up new opportunities for keeping up to date no matter where or when they want to study”⁶

As Ms. Morpeth explained, open and distance learning can make a strong contribution to equivalency programmes in both formal and non-formal settings. Alternative schooling approaches are particularly valuable, especially those that are closely aligned with the formal system. These either provide a bridge to the formal system or operate as a more flexible NFE substitution, but which nevertheless provide a route to formal certification or equivalent qualifications.

Ms. Morpeth mentioned three ODL approaches of particular note:

- Community school initiatives (e.g. schools initiated by the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee [BRAC] and other similar partnerships between non-governmental organizations, education departments and local communities).

6 UNICEF. 2009. “Open and Distance Learning for Basic Education in South Asia: its potential for hard to reach children and children in conflict and disaster areas”, UNICEF ROSA. http://www.unicef.org/rosa/ODL_Report_%28Final_version%29__10_Dec_09.pdf

- Open schools (e.g. the National Institute for Open Schooling [NIOS] in India [the Open Basic Education programme], and the Open School in Sri Lanka).
- Feeder programmes which link NFE to formal provision (e.g. M.V. Foundation, India).

Each introduces flexible qualities, which remove barriers to participation in education and operate (or could operate) at a larger scale. BRAC, for example, has a formal approach, demonstrating that well-developed management systems with centrally-produced, high quality, open learning curriculum resources (for teachers and learners), teacher training in child-centred pedagogy and high levels of community ownership can result in impressive completion, achievement and transfer rates in under-resourced rural areas.

NIOS has shown that investment in an open schooling framework, based on open learning resources (for teachers and learners), a national delivery system and an external route to national qualifications and examinations brings about positive results. This framework has made it possible for other non-formal providers to set up, use and adapt the materials, for schooling to be re-started quickly in emergency zones, for cross-border refugees or the children of families working overseas to continue accessing their own national education in a different country, and for formal schools to benefit (from the resources).

By providing non-formal learning opportunities adapted to specific needs of the learners, MVF's feeder programmes provide out-of-school children and youth a "second chance" route back to formal school and a way out of child labour.

The experiences of BRAC, NIOS and MVF in not only diversifying their provision of education (for a wide variety of hard-to-reach groups) but also in becoming apex organizations (supporting other providers with expertise, training, networking and ready-made resources) provide planners with models from which they can learn. These experiences are also a vital knowledge base from which to develop more coordinated and coherent basic education provision.

Where teacher shortages are observed, ODL can also play a significant role in providing the means for developing a lifelong learning approach to teacher support and training. Furthermore, with careful planning, ODL can play a critical role in providing education in conflict and disaster areas.

2.2.4 Group Discussions: Policy

Following the overview of EP policies, and the case presentations of Indonesia and ODL, the participants brainstormed to identify the major impediments to designing and implementing EP policies and suggested solutions to address them.

The most often-cited barrier listed by participants was limited resources. Participants noted that EPs and NFE are often marginalized in the education system, with the

majority of resources being invested in other “higher status” public goods, such as formal education or health care. A recommended solution was to undertake a situation analysis of EP and NFE to assess its role and its cost and benefits as it compares to traditional formal education. Such analysis can be useful in making informed decisions for policy makers in developing policy provisions and for governments in making appropriate allocations to implement them. In addition, it was suggested that alternative delivery models be explored within formal education, particularly in countries where an NFE department is either weak or non-existent. With resource constraints in education being a persistent challenge, creating separate systems, curriculums and a teaching workforce for NFE may not be feasible or cost-effective in many countries. Introducing and delivering alternative models within formal systems can facilitate better leverage of existing resources to reach the out-of-school groups.

Another important barrier is the low social value associated with EPs. Participants agreed that governments and the general public do not value EPs and that such programmes are often perceived as a second-class education for lower status people. Participants suggested public campaigns and communication strategies would combat negative associations and would promote better understanding of the role of EPs as an integral part of the effort to achieve education for all.

In terms of implementation, the lack of trained teachers was identified as the most critical barrier. Participants noted that there is a severe shortage of teachers with formal training, and remarked that teachers are often ill-equipped to meet the diverse learning needs of students in EP classes. For instance, EP teachers who do not speak the local language (in a minority ethnic community) cannot deliver good quality education to the students, who often do not understand the national language spoken by the teacher.

Other barriers cited by participants included the lack of a clear strategy, structure and information to implement policies. In general, a coherent approach is needed in the development of policy and institutional capacity to ensure effective delivery of EPs, and governments should make efforts to ensure all related stakeholders, including at the central and local levels, are supported and accountable to deliver on their respective roles to ensure high quality EPs.

2.3 Special Session: Non-State Providers, Public-Private Partnerships and Policy

A special panel session was conducted to explore the role of non-State providers (NSPs) and public-private partnerships (PPPs) in alternative learning and EPs. The session sought to convey the importance of creating an enabling environment for non-State providers to contribute to education for the benefit of the poor and disadvantaged, and to define the essential elements of effective partnerships between the public and private sectors.

NSPs are not newcomers in education, but enhanced understanding of and openness to inputs by non-State actors has become ever more critical in improving access to education and the quality of learning experiences. This is particularly true in the effort to reach marginalized children through non-formal education, as non-State actors often have the flexibility and innovativeness that enables them to fill gaps in public services.

The session began with a presentation by Sena Lee (UNICEF EAPRO) who emphasized that while the government bears the obligation to protect, respect and fulfil all children's rights to education, the obligation does not presuppose government's direct provision. Thus, when education services are provided by NSPs, this is not a transfer of the government's obligation but a shifting of the government's role from that of a direct provider to being a purchaser and regulator of services provided by the NSPs.

Ms. Lee noted that although NSPs are sometimes conceived as being incapable of delivering good quality public services, such as education, they often have comparative advantages over State agencies, as they tend to utilize more creative and innovative approaches for improving quality and access to learning. It is important, however, that they're held accountable to appropriate standards and that the government implements effective regulations and monitoring processes.

Non-State providers are already active in the non-formal education sector (i.e. NGOs delivering alternative learning sessions, ICT companies providing education tools, etc.), but not all are recognized and supported by the government through formal partnership arrangements that legitimize their role. Also, their resources are not always leveraged effectively in delivering education. With public investment in education remaining low, it is critical that governments create an enabling environment through appropriate policy changes, and build their capacity to regulate and monitor non-State providers' work, and also share and learn from lessons of non-State providers through consultative policy dialogues.

In sharing related experiences from Mongolia, where the regulatory and legislative environment related to Public Private Partnerships (PPP) in basic services has evolved significantly in recent years, L. Ariunaa (CEO, Intec Co.) introduced the "Tea Break" programme, a key PPP initiative for education, initiated in 2006. The process of developing the procurement, service agreement, and implementation and monitoring of services required various stakeholders, including the Ministry of Education (MOE), private companies and parent associations, to deliver on their roles and responsibilities. It was noted that an element of risk-sharing is key to reaping the benefits of PPPs, and that a clear definition of roles and responsibilities is essential. Mutual trust between NSPs and the government, strong government capacity to regulate and monitor, and open and fair competition among non-State providers were noted as critical components for effective PPPs.

Ms. Ariunaa noted that a Law on Concessions was enacted in early 2010, opening doors to partnerships that effectively recognize and leverage non-State resources to

complement persistent resource and capacity constraints in the public sector. Although the Law on Concessions is primarily related to infrastructure development, the concepts and provisions offer useful lessons for application in basic social services.

Aurea G. Miclat-Teves (Director, Project Development Institute) noted that partnerships can also be established between small scale, non-profit providers and the central and local governments, as in the case of Edukasyon Para sa Ikaunlad ng Katutubo (EPIK) in the Philippines. EPIK offers non-formal learning opportunities for indigenous populations, who can receive equivalency qualifications for education up to level four of secondary school. The roles and responsibilities of stakeholders are clearly defined, as in the case of large-scale PPPs, maximizing the comparative advantages of each stakeholder. For small scale partnerships, it is essential that the local government is willing to work with and support the non-State provider. It was noted that governments can make policy provisions that assist civil society organizations to effectively engage in and contribute to equivalency programmes, including, but not limited to, establishment of standards and guidelines for non-formal education, open consultation and dialogue with non-State providers, and capacity development of local government and community stakeholders.

In some countries, NSPs are widely accepted as key contributors to education development, as in the case of Bangladesh. In their presentation on “PPP and Policies for Equivalency Programmes”, the Bangladesh country team described various types and modes of partnerships that are in place for both for-profit and non-profit providers to deliver learning opportunities from pre-primary to adult literacy. At secondary level, in Bangladesh, over 95 percent of schools can be placed in the PPP category.

The poor and disadvantaged in Bangladesh face a range of barriers to education, including location, gender discrimination, and language. An enabling policy environment, in which NSPs can legitimately provide education, has been crucial in reaching marginalized groups. From these experiences it was noted that it is also necessary to establish appropriate minimum standards and quality assurance mechanisms for EPs delivered by NSPs. Development of a sound regulatory framework, while not sufficient on its own, is a critical step towards expansion of access to high quality learning opportunities. Also, lessons should be drawn from the health sector, which has a longer history of partnerships compared to the education sector.

Presentations were followed by discussions around NSPs and partnerships. Participants noted that issues and challenges related to NSPs vary widely, reflecting the diversity in the purposes, mandates and objectives of the providers. Governments must ensure that policies and regulatory frameworks meet the different characteristics of the various NSP contributions to education. It was also noted that partnerships require new types of capacity for governments, as governments become “purchasers and regulators” of services rather than direct providers. Various channels should be explored, including third-party or semi-independent regulatory bodies that facilitate objective and efficient monitoring of non-State providers and services.

The Workshop participants noted that, with the exception of a few meta-studies of PPP initiatives in education, there is a lack of empirical studies around NSPs in education in developing countries. This is in part due to the strong ideological nature of debates on the role of public providers versus NSPs in education. Many myths surround the role of NSPs in education, reflecting the various ideological perspectives that one often associates with PPPs. Participants agreed that it is important to move beyond the ideological divide towards a pragmatic approach, in which all available resources are leveraged to ensure every citizen fulfils their right to education.

2.4 Curriculum, Teacher Development and Delivery Mechanisms

This session provided an overview of trends and innovations in curriculum design, teacher development and delivery mechanisms for EPs and ACL in the Asia-Pacific region.

2.4.1 Curriculum: Overview, Trends and Innovations

A presentation by Kimberly Parekh (Consultant) examined various issues related to curriculum development, such as the scope and duration of EPs, content (academic and life skills) and modes of delivery.

EPs are delivered at various levels of education, including primary and lower secondary and, most often, upper secondary levels. Some curricula for EPs mirror those of formal education, but, in general, curricula for EPs differ from formal education curricula and vary greatly from each other in terms of the proportion of academic content versus life-skills content. The proportion depends on the target groups. Some countries, such as Mongolia and Thailand, integrate their academic and life skills curricula into one common curriculum, instead of having two separate curricula. In the case of Thailand, work experience is also incorporated into the EP curriculum.

The process of curriculum design also varies by country. Some countries prefer to have a national curriculum, with flexibility for local adaptation, while others permit curriculum design at the provincial and district levels. In addition to flexibility in the curriculum design, some education equivalency programmes offer learners the opportunity to select content that suits their needs best.

Curriculum can be delivered through classroom-based, teacher-led instruction or learner-led, self-paced study through distance education or through a hybrid of these modes. Both classroom-based and learner-led mechanisms need to be supported by well-trained facilitators and are often augmented by the use of innovative ICT. The choice between the various delivery modes should depend on the local context, level of education and learner needs.

Case Study Indonesia: Materials and Modes of Delivery

Usman Syihab (Lecturer, State Islamic University, Indonesia) gave a presentation on Indonesia's Graduate Competency Standards in Indonesia and discussed examples of EP materials and modes of delivery of EPs in Indonesia.

According to Mr. Syihab, the Graduate Competency Standards (*Standar Kompetensi Lulusan* [SKL]) for Package A, Package B, and Package C are the same as the Graduate Competency Standards for Primary School (SD/MI), Junior Secondary School (SMP/MTs), and Senior Secondary School (SMA/MA), as mandated in Ministry Decree No. 23/2006 on Graduate Competency Standards for primary and secondary level education.

Equivalency Education in Indonesia is distinct from formal education in that it aims to develop functional and professional skills so that:

- Package-A graduates possess basic competencies to meet everyday needs
- Package-B graduates possess skills to respond to the demand of work place
- Package-C graduates possess skills to be entrepreneurs.

Learning Materials

Modules and other learning materials (worksheets, thematic local resource materials) are developed by tutors, provincial non-formal education centres (The Centre for Learning Activities Development [CLAD]), and regional non-formal education centres (Regional Centre for Development of Non Formal and Informal Education [RCDNFIE]). Such learning materials are developed based on contents standards outlined by the Board for National Standards of Education.

Modules

The modules contain objectives, expected learning outcomes, activities, practices and a guide to evaluation, and are presented in a thematic model. The modules attempt to integrate academic principles with best practices, while paying attention to the diverse potential of the learners and to ensuring relevance to the real needs of learners and contextualizing instruction so as to match the everyday experiences in learners' lives.

Learning Process

Face-to-face learning can be conducted at least 20 percent of the learning time, while skills practice is conducted at a minimum of 30 percent, and independent learning is conducted at a maximum of 50 percent.

Approaches

Teaching and learning in equivalency education does not simply consist of "chalk and talk", which has been the practice in the past. The various backgrounds, characteristics, competencies and experiences of learners in equivalency education require the utilization of a variety of teaching and learning approaches and methods. The approaches recommended include, but are not limited to, inductive, constructive, thematic, local based approaches, and both pedagogical and andragogical (methods relating to adult learning).

Timetable and Learning Groups

Equivalency education learning is conducted with a flexible time-table. It can be in the morning, evening or night, or on the weekend. It depends on the participants' needs, wishes and conditions.

The maximum number of participants in one learning group is 20 persons for Package A, 25 persons for Package B and 30 persons for Package C.

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Delivery Mechanisms

To cover the very diverse groups and to reach the unreached, several models of equivalency education are adopted. The most popular of them are as listed below.

- **Direct Learning**
This learning model uses face-to-face contact time between tutors and learners, in groups or individually.
- **Learning portal**
Education services are delivered in a venue which can later become a centre that facilitates surrounding Equivalency Education learning units.
- **Repository of knowledge**
A repository of knowledge functions as a place for Indonesian learners living overseas to visit. For example, Entikong in Hong Kong (for Indonesian workers in Hong Kong) and Nunukan (for Indonesian workers on the Indonesia-Malaysia border).
- **Door-to-door service**
This is a mobile service with tutors moving around, using a range of vehicles, to reach learners who face difficulties in reaching fixed learning areas.
 - **Learning motorbike.** In areas difficult to reach by other vehicles, a motorbike is used to reach learners. The motorbikes are equipped with learning materials to be used during the day. Tutors may use three-wheeled vehicle as well, equipped with learning media such as television, tape recorder and white board.
 - **Learning caravan or bus.** This is used to reach learners who are in a remote place that can be reached by cars. Tutors usually come at an agreed time. The caravans and buses can be equipped with a wide range of learning materials and media (books, white boards, radio, tape recorder, TV and DVD), and can accommodate two or more tutors at a time.
 - **Disaster Service Mobile Class.** This is used to serve learners in areas affected by disasters. This service is equipped with tents, wheelchairs, chairs or mats to sit on, books, white boards, radio, tape recorder and TV. This service offers, in addition to regular Package programmes, psychological counselling and skills-training for learners.
 - **Boat.** This is used for people who live by the river or the sea. The boat is equipped with learning media, including a tape recorder and video, learning materials and other facilities. The boat class comes to learners at an agreed time. During the learning process, the boat is either anchored or can be moved.
 - **Paratrooper.** This is used to serve people in mountain areas. This is done through cooperation with local universities through student's fieldwork (Kuliah Kerja Nyata [KKN]).
- **Home-schooling**
This is a structured and conscious activity conducted by family or parents in their home or other venues. Parents must register their education unit with the relevant education department section responsible for equivalency education at the district level.
- **Virtual school**
This is a model that uses ICT as a means of providing education to distance learners as part of an alternative learning system.

2.4.2 Group Discussions: Curriculum

Following the overview of curriculum design and delivery and the case presentation of Indonesia's Graduate Competency Standards, EP materials and modes of delivery, the participants discussed the issues and challenges related to EP curriculum development.

Participants identified several areas of concern. It was noted that, in general, the design of an EP curriculum, including the proportions of academic skills and life-skills, depends on the objectives of the equivalency programme and the ages and needs of the targeted learners. Programmes that aim to develop literacy and basic skills for youth and adults, for instance, may require stronger life-skills components, compared to programmes that aim to assist primary school-aged children to enter into formal schools.

Some level of localization of the curriculum is allowed in most non-formal education systems, but the process varies widely depending on contextual factors, such as governance structures and the capacity of local stakeholders. Participants noted that localization of curriculum is most effective when facilitated by well-trained specialists who have the skills to incorporate local needs without losing the integrity of the core curriculum that allows equivalency and certification.

Another issue raised was the importance of establishing appropriate standards, particularly as they relate to objectives of programmes and monitoring procedures. Some remaining questions were noted for further exploration, including the pros and cons of integrating life skills into different subjects compared to delivering them as separate subjects. The relative importance of livelihood skills training for certain groups was also noted, as well as the challenges in catering to the variety of needs and interests represented in a particular classroom setting. Also, participants noted that in cases where there is no strict age limit for entry into equivalency programmes, particular attention is needed to ensure that the flexibility of the non-formal education curriculum does not lead to promoting drop out from formal education systems.

2.4.3 Teacher Development: Overview, Trends and Innovations

Some illustrative models for teacher recruitment and professional development EPs were presented by Kimberly Parekh (Consultant). As she explained, a variety of types of people become EP teachers including educated youth, community members and current and retired formal school teachers, and they are recruited and promoted according to the education level of the programmes in which they teach and the requisite teaching skills. A common challenge in EPs is the limited resources for teacher development, and teachers are often remunerated with a combination of in-kind contributions, community-contributed salaries and government stipends. Also, even in cases where EPs are fully funded by the government, equivalency teachers may be recruited as contract teachers but face challenges in becoming permanent teachers.

In many instances, EP teachers are themselves trained through non-formal education programmes whereby they gain first-hand experience in creative teaching and learning techniques, such as demonstrations, feedback sessions and peer-to-peer exchange. To facilitate application of such methodologies in EPs, some programmes offer additional teacher support and financial stipends to cover necessary material and transportation needs.

Case Study

Intel

Anne Batey (Manager, K-12 Content and Curriculum, Intel Corporation) presented models of technology-based, teacher development and student learning programmes by Intel.

As Ms. Batey explained, a significant portion of Intel's corporate social responsibility effort is devoted to education initiatives. Intel offers two signature programmes, Intel® Teach and Intel® Learn, which differ by their audiences:

- Intel® Teach: In-service and Pre-service K-12 teachers in formal education
- Intel® Learn: NFE students aged between 8 and 24 in disadvantaged communities

These programs share similar focus, objectives, design, and programme implementation, as explained below.

- The core objectives of each programme promote digital/technological literacy and effective use of technology for Twenty-first Century Learning (defined by skills such as collaboration, critical thinking, and problem solving) important for success in the workplace and as empowered citizens.
- The core pedagogy is project-based, an instructional strategy that gives students authentic, open-ended tasks with a real world context for problem solving, critical thinking and creativity. Assessment emphasizes formative methods that occur throughout the learning cycle and develops skills with peers and self-assessment.
- The programmes are developed and localized in PPPs between Intel, government agencies and NGOs. Careful attention is given during localization to fully incorporate local languages, education initiatives and customs. Local programme development includes cycles of piloting and review to assure good fit.
- The teacher (facilitator) trainings are conducted using the train-the-trainer model. Quality assurance includes careful selection and development of senior trainers with regular refresher training using online and distance delivery of short workshops and events (webinars, online community, etc.).
- Both programmes use a digital resource, Intel® Education Help Guide, for step-by-step instructions in non-technical, student- and teacher-friendly language. The Help Guide is available for free in 27 languages and can be downloaded for offline use.

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Ms. Batey noted that although Intel® Teach was developed for the formal education sector, the concept is not necessarily limited for use in that sector.

Intel® Learn is focused on serving the marginalized groups and has been delivered effectively in community learning centres. Factors for success include a cohort of collaborative coaching teachers as well as a localized curriculum and related documents that appeal to the target group. Establishing the programme in a community begins with discussions between Intel and the Ministry of Education.

Because the programme uses a cascading model of training, the success of the programme depends on a number of basic standards. These may include initiation with the best teachers who are respected and capable of transferring the skills to other teachers as well as systematic, periodic training sessions, including refresher training using mini-lessons and tools and that allow critical feedback and sharing of ideas.

In the case of Intel® Teach, some countries have adopted the programme as part of the accredited teacher training system, which exemplifies the ways that technology can contribute to systematic teacher development.

Intel® Teach includes a portfolio of seven (face-to-face or hybrid online) courses that range on a continuum based on teacher readiness and access to technology.

Two courses were described during the presentation:

- **Skills for Success:** ICT or computer lab teachers are trained on a version of the Intel® Learn curriculum, modified for formal education
- **Getting Started:** Designed for teachers with little or no technology skills to get them started with productivity applications (word processing, spreadsheets, etc.) as they develop instructional materials for use in the classroom.

The portfolio is complemented by a new series of e-learning courses, Intel® Teach Elements, which contain highly engaging, visually-appealing interactive tutorials, exercises and application activities. Two offline courses with an English version of the Help Guide were provided to the Workshop participants on a compact disc.

Intel® Teach has 13 country websites, seven of which are non-English. The best examples of local teacher units, examples and case studies are chosen for the website and updated regularly.

Intel® Teach has a “do-no-harm” approach to use of the internet. The training includes extensive sections on copyright abuse, safe and fair use of the internet and cyber bullying.

Low Technology Model

Intel® Teach principles can be delivered without technology. Teachers can be trained in project-based learning, setting students authentic tasks and managing students to work simultaneously on a series of different activities. These methodologies can be enhanced by technology but do not require it.

2.4.4 Group Discussions: Teacher Development

Following the presentations on teacher development and the Intel® Teach model, the participants discussed issues and challenges related to teacher development, with particular emphasis on the use of ICT resources for EPs and low-cost and effective examples of teacher training that are being implemented in countries of the region.

Four examples of teacher training that are being implemented were shared.

Bhutan: Initially, the MOE conducted teacher training from the city centres. This was decentralized to a training of trainers model, with training conducted in the field, but the quality of the training was compromised. The MOE is now trying to do more coordination and monitoring. The NFE division trains the trainers, gives them training packages and monitors clusters of NFE instructors to ensure better quality.

Mongolia: The MOE works with the Education University of Mongolia to develop NFE pre-service training for teachers. This was piloted last year and was very successful. The training includes content on methodology, multi-grade teaching, and androgogy (learning strategies focused on adults).

Pakistan: The MOE started to localize the teacher-training programme about ten years ago by establishing regional institutes of teacher education, and they established local circle offices at the grassroots level. The purpose was to provide teacher training services to teachers at their doorstep, and to save time and reduce costs by bringing the training to them. This approach also saves students time as teachers are not taken out of the classroom for as long.

Thailand: The Division of NFE in Thailand provides a supplementary e-training programme for NFE teachers. This programme is necessary because of the high turnover rates of teachers, reducing the time the Division of NFE has to train new teachers. Teachers can register, take the course and get a certificate after completion. The course has six components, including action research, English, mathematics and androgogy.

2.5 Special session: The Role of Technology in Delivering EPs

The second special session was conducted with a panel discussion on the role of technology in delivering EPs.

Effective harnessing of technological innovations can greatly facilitate access to, and the quality of, education. This is particularly true for non-formal education programmes, which often require a variety of delivery modes, including distance- and self-learning, to reflect the diversity in the needs of the learners.

Many private IT companies are responding to such needs in education, as part of their broader corporate social responsibility or investments efforts. This session invited several IT companies that are engaged in the education sector through various modes,

based on their core strengths and corporate vision, to give presentations.

The session began with a presentation by Felicity Brown (Asia-Pacific Regional Academic Programs Manager, Microsoft Corporation) on Microsoft's public-private partnerships in support of the use of technology as an accelerator to help transform education. Microsoft works with local, national and international education communities to create technology, tools, programmes and solutions that help address education challenges, while improving teaching and learning opportunities. It was noted that while technology is a tool that can greatly improve teaching and learning, it is only one piece of a larger solution supported by peer-coaching, professional development and innovations in teaching and learning.

Some examples of Microsoft's initiatives in education in the Asia-Pacific region were shared, including "Partners in Learning", "iCafe", "Innovative Teachers" and "Marvin". The "Innovative Teachers" programme showcases teachers who utilize technology in innovative ways to deliver learning, such as the use of podcasts to deliver lessons for students on long bus rides home after school. Innovative software tools were also introduced, such as the "Multi-point Mouse" system, whereby multiple students can link to a single computer simultaneously. Such tools exemplify efficient, low-cost options for schools with limited resources to improve their classroom learning environment. Many offline tools and plug-ins for the Microsoft Office Suite are also available to help teachers and students generate their own exercises and lessons. Ms. Brown concluded by noting that technology can help extend new education opportunities to millions of people, and has great potential to shape ways education is delivered in the future.

Jenny Lim (Head of Corporate Social Investment Asia-Pacific, Nokia Corporation) presented Nokia's strategy to harness mobile technology to help achieve the Education for All goals. Mobile phones are almost ubiquitous and while it is easy to foresee their use as the de facto "textbooks" for people around the world in future, there are also many other ways in which they can support governments in achieving the EFA goals. For example, Nokia Education Delivery (NED), called "Text 2 Teach" in the case of Philippines, allows teachers to download video clips through an interactive application that can connect to television, to facilitate visual learning. Teachers and Ministries of Education can also download a syllabus and lesson plans, all of which could be applicable in both formal and non-formal education settings, including in equivalency education programmes.

Nokia Data Gathering (NDG) facilitates transmission of real-time data, which can be a useful tool for surveys, as it facilitates efficient data collection in remote, hard-to-reach areas. NDG has been successfully used in the Amazon as well as in the Philippines, where it was used to collect data in the aftermath of the major floods a few years ago. Other ongoing projects include mobile games for English learning in India, equipping buses with mobile phones for education in Australia and literacy lessons in Urdu through mobile phones in Pakistan. While these tools are best utilized where "Third Generation" (3G) high-speed data transmission is available, it is not a requirement and technology can adapt to the context. Nokia aims to explore new innovations to pave

the way for the widespread adoption of affordable, effective educational tools and services.

Anne Batey (Manager K-12 Content and Curriculum, Intel Corporation) gave a presentation on Intel's commitment to the transformation of the classroom through the use of technology. As Ms. Batey explained, technology competence builds confidence, supports self-expression and has been a catalyst for positive action in communities. As a tool, technology connects students to the global community through collaborative projects, experts and mentors, and opportunities for self-study. For teachers, technology drives changes in pedagogy to make it more student-centred and focused on higher-order twenty-first century skills such as critical thinking and problem-solving. Technology gives classrooms environments for learning, as with Intel's online Thinking Tools for creating and saving visual representations of discrete thinking skills, like cause-and-effect or prioritizing. Teachers connect, contribute, and collaborate in online communities. "Teachers Engage" is an Intel-hosted online community that connects English-speaking teachers worldwide who share an interest in technology for learning.

For Intel's education programmes, technology improves and streamlines delivery of training and materials. Intel's e-learning series provides visually compelling, interactive content that draws teachers deeply into complex pedagogical strategies. Intel's research shows higher reflection and integration of new concepts when these courses supplement face-to-face training. In 2010, Intel began to convert all training manuals for students and teachers into a digital reader format, which provides more sustainable and cost-effective distribution and a better user experience.

Tatchapol Poshyanonda (Managing Director, Cisco Systems Thailand) gave a presentation on Cisco System's commitment to education as part of its core mandate to "connect people" and bridge the gap of learning and opportunity in education. In Thailand, some of Cisco System's "public benefit investment" initiatives include the Emergency Mobile Unit, Teachers without Borders, Connecting Communities and Environmental Protection.

The "Digital Divide 2011" programme in Thailand is a flagship initiative that aims to provide broadband connection across the nation, in the education and health sectors as well as in government (through e-government). Unblocking the roadblocks to "connectedness" is expected to unleash unprecedented opportunities to create a better learning space, learning moment and learning society. Currently, there are three pilot programmes operating in underserved communities, in conjunction with Cisco Academy, including "One video channel per school" and "click2call", which is ready for replication in other parts of the country.

Mr. Poshyanonda noted that while some fear that improved connectivity actually leads to isolation, the opportunities to utilize technology facilitate greater collaboration in learning opportunities. The ability of technology to adapt to needs was reiterated. Thus, the availability (or lack) of sophisticated technology should not determine the quality

of the education, but rather, one should start by visualizing the goals of education and see how technology can facilitate reaching those goals.

Discussions following the panel provided a lively exchange of ideas around the opportunities, challenges and issues relating to the use of ICT in education. One of the issues raised by participants related to the lack of appropriate infrastructure in areas of most need, and the perception that ICT tends to benefit privileged people with existing infrastructure. In response, it was noted that it is often a misconception that technology requires sophisticated infrastructure in order to be applied in teaching and learning. At Nokia, for instance, it was noted that a range of low-end devices, with basic applications like SMS can be utilized to meet a range of needs in disadvantaged areas. In the case of India, communities without electricity use solar chargers for mobile phones. The panellists expressed the importance of starting by looking at the educational needs and allowing technology to adapt to the educational needs, rather than perceiving technology as being fixed.

Participants also raised questions regarding the practicalities of engaging with private companies, from design to implementation to sustainability. Panellists noted that government policies that facilitate effective partnerships are critical in ensuring that benefits of technology are maximized. Concept design, local adaptation and monitoring of programmes all require fluid, open dialogue and a shared vision of the desired end-results. Governments need to guide private partners in applying technology strategically, with economies of scale in mind, so that initiatives are cost-effective and sustainable.

Finally, the contributions technology can make to student learning outcomes were discussed at length. It was noted that the self-generating processes of technology have been shown to empower students. In response to concerns that computer or mobile device-based learning is limited in promoting human connections in learning, the panellists noted that technology can enhance human connections beyond borders, with more interactive processes in learning than what is available in traditional classrooms. They noted that careful consideration should be given, however, to applying technological innovations with appropriate support mechanisms in place, and technology should adapt to the characteristics and needs of learners. For instance, for children in emerging economies, distance learning may be the only option, whereas for those in advanced countries, it may be an option enjoyed by only some self-initiating students. Thus, it is important for students from disadvantaged backgrounds to have supportive mechanisms to promote the effective use of innovative tools and applications for learning.

2.6 Assessment, Certification and Evaluation

This session provided an overview of trends and innovations in assessment, certification and evaluation related to EP and ACL in the region. Case reviews from Indonesia, Timor Leste and Thailand provided insight into practical issues and critical lessons related to the ways learning through EPs is assessed and recognized.

2.6.1 Assessment and Certification: Overview, Trends and Innovations

A range of options on assessment and certification of EPs, and monitoring, evaluation and research models were discussed in a presentation by Kimberly Parekh (Consultant).

EPs often have processes to ascertain the level and quality of learning achievement that are identical to formal school assessment processes. Often, learners undergo summative assessment processes equivalent to examinations used in formal education. Less common among EPs is an assessment process that takes prior knowledge into consideration, through diagnostic assessments, and ongoing learning through formative assessments.

Assessment and certification processes can be managed directly by the government, or by third-party, quasi-government bodies, and by non-State providers contracted by the government.

Certification of EPs may require a defined number of instructional hours, either classroom-based or learner-led. Certification of EPs can also be through accreditation of programmes managed and implemented by NSPs, based on a set of minimum standards that institutions must meet.

No single approach or model can work in the diversity of contexts and needs addressed by EPs, and governments must ensure that assessment and certification processes are relevant to existing EPs, are designed in a coherent manner and are supported with adequate resources and capacity.

Case Study**Indonesia**

Equivalency education in Indonesia adopts three types of assessment: a placement test, learning process assessment and a national examination.

The placement test is for those who join the equivalency programme without any background records. The test enables the learner to be placed in the relevant grade and level.

The learning process assessment is an outcome assessment. This assessment is carried out independently by students answering and solving practice questions that come with each module. Learners can measure their performance by comparing their responses to the answers given in the answer key. The learners can also complete the learning activities provided in the modules, for example in the grade of experiments, projects and products. After completing all the requirements of each module, learners can move on to the next activities. Tutors carry out evaluation of the learners through observations, discussions, work assignments, tests, appraisal of portfolios compiled by learners during the programme and final evaluation at the completion of each module. Tutors document evaluation results in the learners' report cards.

The evaluation at the completion of the programme is carried out through an Equivalency Education National Examination organized by the National Board of Education Standards, in coordination with the Assessment Centre and the Directorate of Equivalency Education of the Ministry of National Education. The national examination is administered at the end of the Package A, Package B and Package C programmes as a strategy to maintain standards. The purpose is to certify that the qualifications of the students in non-formal education are equivalent to the qualifications of students in the formal education system. The national examination confers on the graduates from the equivalency education programmes the same recognition as given to graduates of the formal education system, i.e. the graduates of Package A have qualifications equivalent to graduates of Primary School, the graduates of Package B have qualifications equivalent to graduates of Junior Secondary School, and the graduates of Package C have qualifications equivalent to graduates of Senior Secondary School. The Equivalency Education National Examination is held twice a year, in April-May and in October.

Case Study

Timor Leste

Filomeno Lourdes dos Reis Belo (Director, National Directorate of NFE, Timor Leste) a representative from Timor Leste gave a presentation on the structure of their education systems, particularly on the assessment process of students and teachers of EPs. According to the national EP scheme, students must undergo continuous assessment every semester (3 times per phase) before they enter the next phase, in order to ensure they have met the equivalent standards of learning set by the government for the formal system. Similar efforts to standardize teacher skills and professionalism are made, by requiring EP teachers to meet the appropriate teacher competency framework of the education system. However, much more work remains for the program scheme. In order to ensure that the skills and knowledge relevant to EP students is assessed, the methodology and content of assessments may need to be differentiated from those of formal system assessments. There needs to be an evidence-based, cost-benefit considerations in adopting different kinds of assessment practices, whether summative formative, competency-based or content-based. Finally, clear planning is needed regarding the process of student certification at the end of the programme and its recognition for the purposes of transfer and promotion into the formal system.

Case Study

Thailand

Wichai Anamnart (Sirindhorn Institute for Continuing Education and Development), representative from Thailand gave a presentation on assessment and certification for EP learners of three education levels: primary, lower secondary and upper secondary, as managed by educational establishments under the Office of Non-Formal and Informal Education (ONIE).

Assessment of learning is ordinarily undertaken by teachers (facilitators) both during learning and at the end of the course. Assessment during learning covers outputs from learners such as project work, reports, exercises and portfolios, and quizzes (defined as formative tests), which together make up 60 percent of the students' total score. The final examination (summative test), developed by the Division of NFE Development, is usually in the form of a multiple choice test and makes up 40 percent of the total score.

To meet the requirements at each education level, EP learners must obtain the required grades from enrolled and transferred subjects, as identified by ONIE; exhibit the desired behaviour (morals and ethics); pass the evaluation of the 100-hour activity for quality of life development; and undertake the NFE National Test.

To assist EP learners, ONIE has developed three innovative assessment strategies to recognize learners' prior learning. They are as follows: transfer of the subjects that the learners have already studied to the EP curriculum; transfer of prior learning and experiences of learners (for example, learning gained through continuing education courses and from knowledge and experiences of special target groups such as conscripts, public health volunteers and the like); and equivalency determination of educational levels aiming to evaluate knowledge and experiences of those who are successful in their career and would like to obtain a higher education level. These innovative assessment strategies help reduce the number of subjects for EP learners so they can enrol in fewer subjects in their particular education level.

2.6.2 Monitoring and Evaluation: Overview, Trends and Innovations

Monitoring and evaluation of EPs is relatively weak across the Asia-Pacific region, with many programme evaluations limited to counting the numbers of learners enrolled and retained and the number who complete a programme. Monitoring and evaluation should be strengthened so that the quality of programmes is improved and their effectiveness in contributing to the desired objectives of expanded educational opportunities are ensured.

Overall, EPs in Southeast Asia demonstrate about a 30 percent completion rate, meaning that only a relatively small proportion of students attain equivalency degrees. Such low figures raise grave concerns on the general quality of EPs, particularly in relation to teacher quality, curriculum design, financing and management, and assessment practices. Impact studies to examine the characteristics of equivalency programmes and the outcomes of learners are needed, and could guide strategies for improving EPs.

Monitoring and Evaluation: Indonesia and Thailand

In Indonesia, monitoring and evaluation of equivalency education is implemented by the main units within the Ministry of National Education, the Provincial Education Office, the District Education Office, the Sub-district Education Office, the National Board of Education Standards, and the Educational Units.

The main objectives of monitoring and evaluation are to measure the achievement levels of the province (or district or city) and improve the effectiveness, efficiency, transparency and accountability of the equivalency programme's management system and education activities.

In Thailand, monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of EPs is the responsibility of the Provincial ONIE and the district Non-Formal and Informal Education Centre (Educational Establishment), while the evaluation of EPs as a whole is the responsibility of the Division of NFE Development. The Division normally evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of EPs using various sources of information including reports from the Provincial ONIE and the District Non-Formal and Informal Education Centre, reports from the supervisory unit, research on school-based curriculum development, reports of the NFE National Test results and reports of internal and external assessment.

2.6.3 Group Discussions: Assessment, Certification and Evaluation

Following the overview presentation and the case examples from Indonesia, Thailand and Timor Leste, the participants discussed the issues and challenges related to recognition of learning through certification, and evaluation of the impact of EPs.

One of the key issues raised was the general lack of recognition of EP certificates. Participants noted that EP qualifications are often considered to be inferior to formal degrees, largely due to the perception that EPs emphasize life-skills at the expense of academic competencies. Participants proposed that strategies are needed to promote

the value of the skills developed through the EP curriculum. It was suggested that this could be achieved through the creation of reputable bodies, such as a “Curriculum Council”, that give more credence to EP curricula. Participants also suggested that support and recognition of EPs by private sector partners can be valuable, and that coordination of these processes should be supported with a Board of EPs similar to those available at private institutions and programmes. Enacting non-formal education laws and regulations was also cited as a way for EPs to gain greater status and a way to gain public recognition of the value of the qualifications gained through EPs.

Participants also noted that assessments of EPs should rely on key principles, including a development process that is aligned with the programme’s purpose and assessment content that is relevant to the curriculum objectives. Assessments should also effectively capture the wide range of competencies promoted in EPs, should utilize a range of assessment options (pre-placement, formative or summative) that match the diverse groups the programmes serve, and should use appropriate and valid methods and tools.

With regard to evaluations, participants reiterated the importance of a standardized and coherent system of monitoring and evaluation that is carried out from central to local levels. As discussed previously, the relatively low 30 percent completion rate of EPs in Southeast Asia reveals the need for greater attention to monitoring and evaluating the quality of EPs. In particular, the extent to which EPs can reach marginalized groups and deliver good quality learning outcomes need to be measured and weighed against the cost of providing EPs. In some cases, the impact of EPs may be less than that of alternative delivery within formal systems, which would merit greater emphasis on cost-effective, alternative delivery mechanisms. Ultimately, rigorous evaluation of the impact of EPs and alternative delivery models is crucial for broader advocacy and informed decision-making by countries.

3. Conclusions and Moving Forward

At the conclusion of the Workshop, each country team consolidated the lessons identified during the Workshop and proposed key areas of action to be taken in their respective countries. The participants noted that vision, political will and commitment to action can help countries to identify effective strategies and pathways to address the issues and challenges faced in advancing EPs and alternative learning. Participants identified a range of processes (from short- to long-term) for developing or enhancing EPs in their countries, from advocacy and policy research to curriculum revision and certification and evaluation.

In closing, Abdul Hakeem (Education Advisor and Coordinator, UNESCO Bangkok) and Cliff Meyers (Regional Advisor, UNICEF EAPRO) reiterated the strategic importance of EPs and alternative delivery, and encouraged countries to continue to explore, develop and implement positive steps towards providing effective, sustainable EPs that meet the learning needs and enable all learners, particularly the large number of children who still remain beyond the reach of formal education, to realize their right to education.

Mr. Hakeem noted that alternative delivery models have the flexibility to cater to the diversity and context of learners, but we must not lose sight of the importance of recognition, comparability, equivalency and quality assurance of these programmes. The stigma associated with non-formal or alternative modes of learning, considered to be inferior to formal education, can be removed only when EPs provide the same level of quality of education to that acquired through formal education and produce results that are comparable. To do this involves addressing issues related to policy, curriculum design, development of learning materials, and training personnel to effectively administer and evaluate EPs. Introducing alternative delivery models in formal systems may also serve to augment the social value of such programmes and the resources available for reaching the marginalized.

The task of establishing good EPs is, therefore, far from simple but not unattainable. Discussions between colleagues and partners across the Asia-Pacific region during the Workshop provided a platform to embark on this task. It was noted that the critical measures identified by each country team towards promoting EPs is an encouraging start.

UNESCO and UNICEF are honoured to be partners in this endeavour and will continue to provide support to countries of the region in undertaking the necessary measures identified. UNESCO hopes to identify specific countries for support in the areas of policy development and piloting of EPs. UNICEF continues its commitment to promoting a network of exchange and also hopes to further support research, documentation and evidence-building for EPs across the region. Partnerships with the private sector for appropriate delivery models using ICT is an area both UNESCO and UNICEF support.

As a follow up to this Workshop, a second regional workshop is anticipated to take place in 2011 to review lessons and the progress of countries as well as to identify the next steps in promoting EPs and alternative learning for reaching the marginalized and achieving the EFA goals.



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