



Balanced and Inclusive Education

Making the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity a Reality

August 2017



Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Secretariat
Mom Luang Pin Malakul Centenary Building 920 Sukhumvit Road,
Klongtoey, Bangkok 10110, Thailand
Phone: +66 (0) 2391-0144 • Website: <http://www.seameo.org>



The Education Relief Foundation
Route des Morillons 1, 1218 Geneva, Switzerland
Phone: +41 (0) 22791-6302 • Website: <http://educationrelief.org>

IN THIS BRIEF

- 1 Introduction
- 2 The Current Reality:
Is Education in Southeast Asia Balanced and Inclusive?
- 3 Moving SDG 4 Forward in Southeast Asia:
How Do We Make Education Balanced and Inclusive?
- 4 Policy Recommendations:
What Can Southeast Asia Do to Make Balanced and Inclusive Education a Reality?

The Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation (SEAMEO) Secretariat (SEAMES) and the Education Relief Foundation (ERF) convened a High-Level Stakeholders Meeting to discuss possibilities of working together to achieve balanced and inclusive education (BIE) in Southeast Asia. SEAMEO high officials and representatives from Member Countries, along with partners such as the United Nations (UN) Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organisation (UNESCO), the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP), the Asia-Pacific Center for Education for International Understanding (APCEIU) and the Rotary Club of Mechan delivered papers and served as conduits to facilitate the discussion.

The meeting aimed to **(1)** update attendees on the current BIE situation in Southeast Asia through country paper presentations; **(2)** serve as a

platform for sharing policies and implementation mechanisms for countries to achieve BIE in accordance with the ERF’s “Four Pillars of BIE”—intra-culturalism, trans-disciplinarity, dialecticism, and contextuality; and **(3)** discuss key recommendations to promote BIE in the context of the ever-increasing complexity of the Southeast Asian economic, socio-cultural, and political environment in order to develop teachers imbued with Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) ideals.

SEAMES and ERF facilitated an exchange of best practices and identified points of possible convergence and collaboration for implementing projects and programmes that will help countries and Southeast Asia fulfill their commitment to attaining the “Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),” specifically SDG 4, which focuses on enhancing education by making ERF’s Four Pillars of BIE a reality.

The Current Reality

Is Education in Southeast Asia Balanced and Inclusive?

There are 3.3 million children and youth in Southeast Asia who are considered out of school. If they are all educated, the region can potentially gain US\$0.09–17.05 billion. With this, SEAMEO pushed for the “SEAMEO 7 Priority Areas.”

What is the present situation in terms of achieving BIE? How do we bring about education for all (EFA) using the ERF’s four pillars of BIE?

- **Brunei Darussalam:** Education is mandatory in the country so children from far-flung areas are brought to town to study. Parents are penalised and can be incarcerated for three years for failing to send their children to school. Only children afflicted with Down syndrome and autism stay at home. The country’s small population allows it to easily implement any kind of education programme.
- **Cambodia:** The country instituted a master plan specifically for children with disabilities. As a multi-lingual country, multi-lingual education is provided to indigenous groups such as the Kroeung and Tumpoun. Textbooks and instructional materials for children with special needs have been made available. The country is also in the process of increasing awareness about disabilities and special needs at the local level despite certain challenges.
- **Indonesia:** Education in Indonesia is decentralised. Most of the schools are under the authority of the district government whilst special education is managed by the provincial government. Like other countries, Indonesia identified challenges in ensuring BIE. Probably the greatest challenge it now faces is the non-harmonisation of policies between provincial (that control special education [SPED] programmes) and district (that run mainstream schools) governments.
- **Lao People’s Democratic Republic (PDR):** The country already has a national policy and an action plan on inclusive education, which aims to ensure equitable access to quality EFA even for the unreached. The country hopes to provide quality education that is relevant to students’ individual capacities. It is currently operationalising its national plan because it believes a strong policy on inclusive education can address disparities and ensure gender parity. It has made progress in addressing barriers to inclusion as evidenced by increased enrollment rate among children aged 3–5, decreased dropout and repeater rates, and increased number of private and public schools. At present though, only two schools have been specifically created to educate children with special needs.
- **Malaysia:** The country has a diverse ethnic and religious background. Its national schools are a means to promote unity in diversity. To improve its educational quality and ensure equitable access, it is guided by the “Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013–2025” and the “National Transformation 2050 Plan.” For the country, BIE focuses on an individual’s physical, emotional, and spiritual development. It intends to inculcate leadership thinking, bilingual proficiency (Malay and English or other languages), ethics, spirituality, and national identity in students and transform its existing vocational education through public-private partnerships (PPPs) into vocational colleges. It believes students should prepare for the digital future, which requires the creation of new teaching modules, information and communication technology (ICT)-skilled teachers, the right competency diagnostic tools, and other digital innovations. The government awards schools that promote sustainability (those that employ food waste management or strong and solid disaster risk reduction [DRR] strategies).

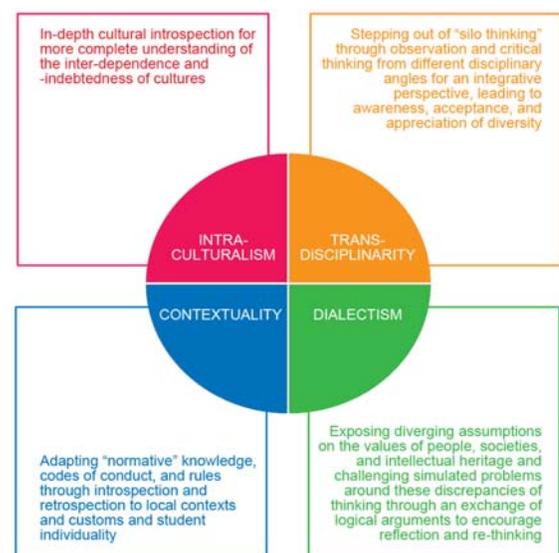
- Philippines:** The “1987 Philippine Constitution” mandates inclusive education and the right to quality education. This covers non-formal, informal, and indigenous learning systems. It also recognises Madrasah education. As a result, the number of out-of-school children has been decreasing. The country also recently revised its basic education curriculum, adding two years to basic education. The “K–12 Programme” features mother-tongue-based multi-lingual education and different tracks for senior high school. At present, the country’s understanding is limited despite the existence of the “Inclusive Education Policy Framework for Basic Education,” which recognises the diversity of learners, schools, and communities. This actually gave rise to multi-grade programmes, open high schools, alternative delivery modes (ADMs) of education, and other alternative learning systems (ALSs). Filipino learners are provided education regardless of gender, culture, ability, age, ethnicity, social class, or religious belief. The country has a learner-centric, developmentally appropriate, culture-sensitive, relevant, gender-sensitive, and contextualised curriculum that is suitable even for mother-tongue-based learning.
- Thailand:** The country has a new educational strategy that especially addresses barriers to inclusion. It created schools for those with special needs and others that cater to all kinds of needs. Thailand also has hospital- and home-based programmes for those with special needs. It also has a 20-year national strategy cognisant of the “2008 Education for Individuals with Disabilities Act.” Disadvantaged children or those who suffer from poverty, are marginalised, belong to ethnic minorities, are afflicted with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), and whose parents are not Thai nationals or are illegal migrants are also educated. The government intends to learn more about mapping and identifying disabled children being implemented in the Philippines. The country would like to follow in the footsteps of the Philippines, which now has an electronic education system that collects information on children for use as inputs to identify their social welfare assistance requirements.

Moving SDG 4 Forward in Southeast Asia

How Do We Make Education Balanced and Inclusive?

ERF acknowledges the importance of the World Economic Forum’s 21-Century Skills and the extensive research work performed by the Education Research Institutes Network in the Asia-Pacific (ERI-Net) on transversal competencies that enable the youth to become successful citizens.

Committed to contributing to further research on the implementation and impact of such skills in educational practices, ERF promotes intra-culturalism, trans-disciplinarity, dialecticism, and contextuality—the four chosen pillars of its work towards education that is balanced and inclusive.



ERF firmly believes that further research is required to demonstrate how these pillars aid in the social, ethical, and cultural development of the youth and better understand the contextual needs, uptake, and impact of these proposed pillars towards more BIE practices.

SEAMEO has long been a compelling force in promoting inclusive education. It enhances cooperation in education, science, and culture for a better quality of life. In the past five decades, SEAMEO maintained its excellent reputation for

leading the region in delivering quality and accessible educational programmes for all. In the post-2015 agenda, SEAMEO likewise adopted the 7 Priority Areas for the next two decades, encouraging Member States to **(1)** promote universal early childhood care and education (ECCE); **(2)** address barriers to inclusion; **(3)** ensure resilience in the face of emergencies; **(4)** promote technical and vocational education and training (TVET); **(5)** revitalise teacher education; **(6)** harmonise higher education and research; and **(7)** adopt a 21st-century curriculum.

Policy Recommendations

What Can Southeast Asia Do to Make Balanced and Inclusive Education a Reality?

The SEAMEO Regional Centre for Educational Innovation and Technology (INNOTECH) facilitated an engaging discussion on plans of action for working with country partners on BIE. Key recommendations to promote BIE in the context of the ever-increasing complexity of the Southeast Asian economic, sociocultural, and political environment were discussed. The table on the next page presents the outputs of the high-level meeting.

Capacity Building of Teachers	Pedagogical Practices	Curriculum	Learning Materials	Data and ICT	Infrastructure and Facilities
Train teachers to adopt integrated approaches	Introduce Global Citizenship Education (GCED) in subjects, especially social science	Understand values and social responsibility	Develop strategies or modules for "second-chance education"	Develop mobile apps for data access or integration	Provide accessible and equitable facilities in schools and communities
Advocate BIE across levels to support capacity-building activities	Change the mental into the social educational model	Involve parents and children in curricular development (needs assessment)	Train teachers to contextualise learning materials for children with special needs and encourage flexible learning	Create a network of schools	Develop standards for facilities to satisfy BIE requirements
Establish working discussion groups in accordance with action plans (invite resource persons and experts on BIE)	Encourage students to learn other languages	Use the universal design for lifelong learning	Create more learning materials that have better local context and use more local examples; encourage appreciation for local contributions, especially in the fields of science and literature	Train teachers on database formulation	Strengthen connections between teachers and students
Use ICT to support teacher training	Adapt pedagogical practices to students' learning styles	Localise or indigenise curricula	Use traditional materials in life skills teaching	Build an e-library for both national and regional users	Ensure the support of parents and the society for BIE-related initiatives
Build capacity of mobile teachers in leading adult learners, the disabled, and other disadvantaged people	Develop mother-tongue-based learning materials	Reform or develop curricula or teaching-learning materials to meet all learners' needs		Facilitate the organisation of digital hubs	Constantly share student progress with parents

Capacity Building of Teachers	Pedagogical Practices	Curriculum	Learning Materials	Data and ICT	Infrastructure and Facilities
Provide special BIE and language training	Bridge the generation gap between students (millennials) and educators (Gen Xers)	Embed education for peace development and global citizenship as content of core subjects		Create thematic webinars for the use of both teachers and students	Provide adequate safety and security awareness training
Improve teachers' ability to spot special students	Encourage more learning than teaching	Embed inclusive education in teacher education curricula		Establish special schools with BIE resources	
Continuously upgrade teachers' skills	Use the cooperative learning approach to teaching	Make curricula more relevant to the ever-changing global requirements		Improve data collection, disaggregation, and analysis	
Share best practices		Use all known disciplines and involve all kinds of experts in designing or revising curricula			
Encourage the use of local wisdom from parents and local leaders to enrich teaching		Integrate "coding" into curricula as part of digital literacy			
		Combine elements of foreign curricula into one's own core curriculum			

For BIE to become a reality in Southeast Asia, teachers' capacities need to improve, pedagogical practices need to be enhanced, more relevant curricula need to be created and implemented, contextually and situationally relevant learning materials that every student can understand need to be created and used, data and ICT tools need to be taken advantage of, and school infrastructure and facilities in response to the needs of 21st-century teaching and learning need to be built. Only with all of these can Southeast Asian nations truly realise ERF's Four Pillars of BIE—**intra-culturalism, trans-disciplinarity, dialecticism, and contextuality**—and the vision of SDG 4.