

## Recommendations

### Regional Conference on Teachers and Equitable Education

#### 30 October 2021

#### Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that the immediate school closures and learning losses have deeply impacted marginalized students, which has left these already challenged learners even further behind. Since 2020, national education stakeholders and the international community have responded to this unprecedented crisis affecting both educational and economic sectors by pooling various human, knowledge, and financial resources to support the continuity of learning. The Equitable Education Fund (EEF) of Thailand, in partnership with the Thailand Ministry of Education, UNESCO Asia and Pacific Bureau for Education, UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office (UNICEF EAPRO), UNICEF Thailand, Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) and Save the Children, have joined this call and supported multiple initiatives to promote equity-based learning over the past year.

As teachers' capacity has been identified as one of the important factors in ensuring inclusive and quality learning for all, the theme of the 2021 Regional Conference on Teachers and Equitable Education focused especially on teachers and equitable education. The Regional Conference is organized with the aim of raising awareness and sharing information on equity-based education at the national level, and to provide an opportunity for participants to collectively reflect on existing and new strategies for building teachers' capacity to foster equity in their work. This Conference intended to offer participants an opportunity to exchange ideas and learn how equity is shaped in the various invited countries; how efforts are made in each to ensure educational equity in different contexts; and how teachers are supported in this endeavor.

#### Recommended actions to enable teachers to promote equitable education in a dynamic world

##### 1. Create the vision of equitable teachers, and imbed this vision into teacher policy frameworks

The vision should recognize the critically important role teachers play on the frontlines of education, and intend to empower them with the training, professional development, support and working conditions they need to effectively deploy their talents. Attributes, skills, and competencies of equitable teachers are to be clearly defined collectively by policy-makers, officials, teachers, parents, students and other education stakeholders in each country in view of its education disparities both before and after the COVID-19 pandemic, and take stock of required human resources for a rapidly changing, post-pandemic future. The vision of what constitutes an 'equitable teacher' is to be concrete, realistic, and inspiring to all stakeholders in their promoting equitable education to develop further the potential and unique competencies of the equitable teacher.

The vision should be well captured and embedded into teacher policy frameworks, as well as integrated in the national education plans and programmes. It is essential to promote the understanding of what ‘equitable education’ is in reference to its unique practices and key roles of teachers in this endeavor.

## **2. Promote effective, continuous professional development of teachers in service to promote equitable education**

Continuous professional development for teachers is the key to reactivating and making the most of the asset they represent for promoting and instilling equitable education in all aspects of learning. Though the terms ‘equitability’ or ‘equity’ might be comparatively new, they have been practiced by committed and professional teachers in schools and classrooms throughout Asia and the Pacific for some time. The defining concepts and practices of equitable education and equitable teachers are not things to be imported from outside regional contexts, but something to be found and scaled in each locality and country. The effective strategies of continuous professional development in regard to equitable education could thus focus on the mentoring system and peer learning through local professional networks, online modules/courses through blended learning, collaborative action research and study by teachers, and development of the information and data platform on equitable education and teachers at various levels. The information and data platform should be set to share and accumulate good cases and approaches for all children at different situations, background and contents.

## **3. Strengthen decentralized support system to empower teachers to promote equitable education**

The elements of leadership and responsibility embraced by teachers on the ground are ultimately the key factors catalysing equitable education. A decentralized support system is essential to motivating and sustaining the good performance of equitable teachers. Area-based education is one of the more effective methodologies to promote a decentralised support system for teachers. A productive decentralized support system could include the following:

- Delegated authority and responsibilities for local governments, school head teachers, and classroom teachers, including the availability of data for decision making
- Developing a new set of performance indicators of teachers
- Financial and promotional incentives based on performances, experiences, and mobilities
- Equitable deployment of teachers, including an inclusive teacher workforce
- Regular exchanges and transfers among teachers and officials (policy-makers)
- Special support for housing and transportation
- Teacher well-being resources, including psychological support

## **4. Review the curriculum of teacher education and integrate the concepts and practices of equitable learning in the curriculum**

While focusing on the capacity development of teachers in service and its supporting system, it is important to review the curriculum of teacher education through the perspective of equitable education, and to effectively include the concept and practices of equitable education in the curriculum. It is recommended that the teacher education curriculum include understanding the attributes, skills, and competencies of equitable teachers, how to put into practice equitable concepts in real situations in the different country contexts, and understanding the social and emotional learning of children. Capacity development of teacher educators at teacher colleges and institutions would be the first step in this direction. It is also recommended to set a research and development unit on equitable education in the relevant department of the college/university.

#### **5. Enhance monitoring and research, and effectively communicate evidence**

It is highly recommended to invest in the research and evaluation of interventions which enable teachers to promote equitable education and equitable teachers. Equitable education is the smartest investment for all countries, as it is for the sake of humanity. The potential impact of equitable education and the development of equitable teachers is immense for individuals as well as for the country in the collective terms of economy, public health, social stability, and promoting democracy. Monitoring and measuring the impacts of equitable education is essential to improving the equitable education system at present, as well as to expand it. Perhaps even more important, all evidence to demonstrate the results and impacts that equitable teachers need to be truly effective must be communicated through a wide range of media and communications networks locally, regionally, and nationally.