

【Dialogue between Speakers and Participants】

Ho Thanh My Phuong (SEAMO RETRAC)

Thank you very much. Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share with you ideas on the quality of education which is always considered in the life and development of every nation. If the country's educational system is of high quality, it has the ability to achieve. It helps and strengthens society to be better and the term quality of education is heard everywhere and it is of great interest to all people: politicians, businessmen, scholars, investors, teachers, students, parents and community people. What is addressed here this afternoon is quality education and what is the definition of such. What do we mean by the quality of education? Is it the same or different across the countries? What is the consensus on the quality of education? We hope to identify this.

Now, I would like to open the floor for questions.

Question 1

Kennedy Shepande (Embassy of Zambia)

Thank you very much Madame Moderator. First of all I would like to thank you Madame Moderator and panelists for excellent presentations. Now looking at education and quality of education for example in a country like my own, Zambia, our experience begins with the primary education where that quality of education has to be determined by a) the teacher, b) the educational environment quality of the classroom whether under a tree or in a model classroom and c) by the quality of educational materials available. Now the first crisis we face is that the primary school teacher him/herself would have been one person that was squeezed out of the educational system because they do not have the ability to go to higher education or even university so that becomes the first primary crisis. These people did not consider teaching as their priority but teaching became a last resort. In other words they lack motivation. So I would like to find out from you how we can tackle this problem. Thank you.

Question 2

Akina Noguchi (Tsukuba University)

One question for all the speakers is that now we have heard all the stories have a common quality of education for the development of citizens. But quality differs by countries and contexts. Now I think another aspect, I believe as some of the speakers have mentioned, is education as a way to respond to individual different needs such as minority groups. In the developing and developed countries, I want to ask all of the speakers your opinion about what do you think of seeing quality education as a way of responding to minorities' needs?

Question 3

Sengsoulintha Khampheng (JDS Student)

Thank you very much for your interesting presentation. Regarding Dr. Ho Thanh My Phuong the future challenge of Vietnam is the shortage of promoting training. If I review from the viewpoints of Dr. Joseph Ampiah, student achievement is relative to the technology application. And Dr. Hector Valdes also takes the viewpoint that students can bring in cognitive skill thinking. If I come back to Dr. Ho Thanh My Phuong in the case of the shortage of training, you want to encourage ICT teacher training in Vietnam. My question is in which field would you like to put ICT first? Because actually we have to think about efficiency in teacher training and this is very important with improving language ability. Thank you.

Response from the panelists

Ho Thanh My Phuong (SEAMO RETRAC)

The first question is more about teachers who are not qualified to go to higher education and do not achieve their profession as a high priority. When faced with this lack of motivation in teaching, how should we deal with this situation? Do our panelists have any ideas?

Héctor Valdés (UNESCO-Santiago, Coordinator, LLECE)

57 million teachers are involved in basic education. 6 billion people live on this earth so that means a small number of teachers will have to take care of such a huge number of learners and how to motivate and how to get good achievement results is indeed a challenge. Politically we have to improve the motivation of teachers through higher income and give more training for teachers to motivate teachers. There should be in-service and pre-service training opportunities. According to a scholar in Russia, teachers teach and when they stop learning that is the end of their vocational life. In other words, a teacher is not only a teacher but also a learner. So we need to have a comprehensive policy for teachers in which they are given a very high social status and the teaching profession is considered as an honorable and a noble job. Teachers are not paid good salaries and are suffering from low wages. In comparison to other jobs, their wage is 1/6th or 1/15th of other occupations. Education is a low paying job and people do not want to be a teacher. Teaching should be made an attractive job for a university graduate.

Ho Thanh My Phuong (SEAMO RETRAC)

In addition to the ideas expressed by Dr. Valdés, I think there are other things we can do as well. For example, to try and create a very friendly environment for the teachers. The teachers' voices should be heard by the school leaders because when they have a good working environment where they are respected not only by the students but school leaders, they will be more committed to their career.

Daniel Sifuna (Kenyatta University)

I would like to just reemphasize that the issue is not only untrained teachers, but even the ones who are trained in the system and who are so demoralized that they are not committed to the job. The basic problem is remuneration. Teachers are the lowest paid and yet they do lot of work in the schools which most governments do not actually recognize and seem not to appreciate. During the last two weeks, for example, we had a big strike in my country after teachers had earlier on warned the government that they were going to strike, but the government didn't listen. When they didn't go to schools for two weeks that's when the government woke up and decided to address the teachers' needs. It promised to raise their salaries by 100%, but pay them in two stages. First, they will pay 30% up front and then if the economy improves, it will pay teachers the rest. When is the economy going to improve ? To pay 70% when the economy improves is nonsensical when there is rampant corruption. The amount of money our governments use on wasteful projects or on themselves could adequately pay those teachers. The issue is lack of interest on the part of the government.

In regard to the question on minorities, in Dakar Framework of Action (2000), commitments were made but when you go to the ground you don't see anything being done for minorities. The lack of commitment is again the problem. What I'm trying to say is that we need to take a critical look about quality education in the mainstream; whose quality is it? Is it merely to reproduce the quality for the dominant classes in which minorities can only be mentioned in passing!

Hanako Senuma (NIER, Japan)

I want to touch on two things: the TIMSS questionnaire and the recruiting of teachers in Japan. I have already

discussed the students' performance on TIMSS, but there is also the question of teachers' mathematical ability. The issue of whether or not the survey should assess teachers' mathematical ability in addition to students' performance has been debated in the international community. This shows what an international issue the low quality of teachers has become in the international community. Teachers' ability, however, is not being assessed as it is difficult to make teachers solve math problems. Instead, in the teacher questionnaire, TIMSS asked the teachers of mathematics how prepared they felt to teach a subset of the mathematics topics. The percentage of teachers that reported feeling "Very Well" prepared to teach is relatively lower in Japan as compared to other countries. But this doesn't mean that students' performance is always high in the countries in which teachers replied that they are very well prepared. Japanese teachers tend to understate their ability.

Now I would like to talk about recruiting teachers. The original meaning of the Chinese characters for the word *sensei* (teacher) in Japanese is one who was "born before you" and thus has a deeper understanding of life. As those who have gone before, teachers must guide their students. In Japan, teaching was thought to be a calling, and it was a very popular job. In the past there were dozens of applicants for every job opening. Today there is less competition; for example, the ratio of applicants to job openings for elementary school teachers in Tokyo is now only about two to one. Teachers' wages have risen since the 1970s, but that does not necessarily mean that we have better teachers. There are many problems with teachers' ability, their attitudes and their behavior in the classroom. How to reward good teachers with high pay is still an issue as it is difficult to identify them. Prefectures carry out induction training and in-service training for teachers with 10 and 15 years of experience. Starting this year, teachers must take a training course to renew their licenses every 10 years. Teacher's licenses used to be valid for life, but now they must be renewed like driver's licenses. We hope that the training course for renewing teacher's licenses will enhance the quality of teachers, but we don't know whether things will change for the better or not.

Ho Thanh My Phuong (SEAMO RETRAC)

Regarding the second question about minorities, Prof. Sifuna mentioned a little about minorities but do any of you have any further ideas as to the needs of students especially those minority students?

Joseph Ampiah (University of Cape Coast)

On the issue of minority groups and disadvantaged groups in Ghana for example we realize that 80% of senior high school students who go to university come from only 20% of high schools. The others come from 500 senior high schools and therefore most of the students come from only 20% of the schools. Thus lots of students who are disadvantaged are not able to compete. Government public universities provide a special allocation given to students from lower aggregate schools and some spaces are created for them in the university. Really it has been shown that when students are given this opportunity they really excel so it means we need to target these groups. I think that the emphasis in our education is on academic training and so many people want to go through academia. But there are many vocational and many other programs which are not for weaker students but rather those students whose interests lie in those domains. Weaker students are made to pursue technical and vocational education and are sheltered away from the sciences. I believe that is not good for the students. Individuality goes with diversity. We should be wary of overemphasizing one thing and neglecting to look at what an individual wants to do. To emphasize vocational or technical education is fine with me. But should not force students to select anything at all, then it is going to be a problem for education not just for the individual. Individual choices should be based on how an individual thinks they can contribute the most benefit to society.

Ho Thanh My Phuong (SEAMO RETRAC)

To go on to question three about ICT in schools. In Vietnam, ICT is encouraged in the schools first for the teachers. We ask the teachers to use ICT in their teaching preparation not in the classroom. So they know how to use the computer, prepare lesson plans not by handwriting, and also how to get access to the internet to get more resources for their teaching. The second way we use ICT is for teacher training. We offer classes for the teachers on line and at the same time teachers from different provinces can go to the computer and get the same access. This is the project SEAMO began in the Philippines and it has proven to be successful. ICT is also encouraged in that we equip more and more computers with internet access for the student. Usually the teachers give assignments and in their assignment they require the students to go on line to get more information or to get pictures or data from a specific kind of resource. And also we use ICT in school administration. 10 years ago it was completely by hand but now almost 90% is done with the help of the computer. So that is how we're using ICT in Vietnam. May I ask for ideas from our panelists on this question? Do you have any more ways in which ICT can be used or do you believe that using ICT is one way to improve the quality of education?

Héctor Valdés (UNESCO-Santiago, Coordinator, LLECE)

In my opinion, one of the efforts which need to be made through ICT is to use new technology to reduce the digital divide through school education. In this context I think that very well structured policies are important. About a week ago in my office, someone was handed a computer system in a school as a priority item. But to offer this computer, only 20% of countries have the electricity necessary to be a candidate to receive this system. Hence the picture of a computer being given was the real purpose. The individual merely wanted to be in the picture and the issue was not to solve the problem of the digital divide. There has to be a competent soldier to use that weapon and the one we have is a quality teacher.

Ho Thanh My Phuong (SEAMO RETRAC)

Ladies and Gentlemen, what do we mean by the quality of education viewed from different aspects and approaches? There are a variety of indicators and some have been paid more attention to than others such as examination tests. But there are many other factors to explore. Despite the multiple perspectives, some consensus can be achieved if we view quality of education in the following manner:

1. context of education ensuring equal access to education
2. input which includes teaching quality and curricula
3. process teaching and learning environments for student motivation and creativity
4. outcome or the products which can be measured by different tasks and efficiency of school education.

Though notions may change over time, identifying what education means will allow the government, teachers, and students to ensure the quality of education in their country.

Finally, I would like to thank the panelists for their presentations, as well as the audience for your kind attention and productive questions and discussion.

Kazuhiro Yoshida (Hiroshima University, Japan)

Thank you for your amazing capacity to be perfectly punctual. We shall take a 30 minute break and as we have many experts on the floor I hope that you will take advantage of this time to be involved in further discussion with the panelists. The second session will begin from four o'clock.