NEWSLETTER
ANTRIEP

Vol. 25 No.2 July - December 2019 *Bi-annual*

Learning Outcome in Schools: Issues and Initiatives for Improvement

The current issue of the ANTRIEP newsletter focuses on "Learning Outcome in Schools: Issues and Initiatives for Improvement". These articles have been written in the context of different member-countries in the Asia Pacific region such as, Australia, China, India, South Korea, Nepal and Vietnam.

The learning outcome of children in schools is widely accepted as one of the major indicators of quality of education. Each and every reform done in the context of improving the system of school education considerably impacts the learning outcome of children enrolled in schools at different levels. Many countries across the globe are striving for bridging the learning gaps of children which are widening because of their socio-economic background, gender, language of instruction, types of school they attend and location of their residences. Several initiatives are being taken at the national and international levels for improving quality of education which, in turn, have an impact on learners' performance. In addition, many empirical studies are also being conducted to identify various issues pertinent to children's educational performance. The current issue of the newsletter focuses on learning outcome which is a debatable issue and has generated serious concerns regarding quality of education.

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The first article talks about the outlined 21st century educational goals aimed to enhance students' learning skills which include general capabilities such as, creative thinking, literacy and numeracy, social and ethical understanding, etc. to address learning areas. Further, the author has also mentioned a framework developed by ACER for the skill development of learners in the article. Based on this framework, ACER has been providing resources in the form of series of master classes in schools across Australia to develop different skills of learners.

The subsequent article has focused on China's experience in academic performance of children. The article is based on the findings of the first report on

Quality Monitoring of Compulsory Education which has focused on the performance of children in compulsory education and the associated factors like, poor quality of teaching, less utilisation of teaching resources, etc. Further, based on the facts and figures of monitoring results, the author has suggested a few aspects to improve learning achievements among children.

The next three articles discuss the status of learning outcome of children in the Indian context. All these articles explaining the Indian situation have also discussed the implications of the Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE), 2009 and the New National Education Policy, 2020 on overall learning situation in India.

The next article is based on the experience of South Korea which has witnessed widening of the gap between low and high performing students and associated factors. The author has discussed about various initiatives undertaken by the South Korean Government through several policies to improve the learning outcome among children. The author has mentioned that these initiatives have been taken not only to improve learning skills but also to upgrade the curriculum of teacher education.

The following article explains the gaps in learning and initiatives for improvement in the context of Nepal. The article includes different efforts being made by the Nepal Government for improving the learning outcome of students through decentralisation of educational governance, intervention in teacher development and implementation of continuous assessment system. The author further provided some data on students' achievement indicating performance in basic skills and knowledge in Nepali language and Mathematics. In addition to above, a few specific interventions for improving quality of education under School Sector Development Plan by the Nepal Government were also discussed in this article.

The concluding article deals with the status of learning outcome in the context of Vietnam. It highlights the measure of educational effectiveness and improving academic achievement in view of 'culture of testing' policy with an objective of improving quality of education. In this context, the author has mentioned the positive influence of this policy on students and their learning achievement. However, a few challenges in the light of this policy in the country context along with the recommendations for meeting these challenges were also discussed by the author.

All the articles covered in the current issue of the newsletter have provided an in-depth understanding of important issues and challenges pertinent to learning outcome of school going children in different countries' contexts. These articles have also highlighted plethora of initiatives taken by the Governments of these countries for improving learning outcome of children and further identified the measures needed in this regard. It has been found that, each country is striving for achieving good quality of education which is intrinsically important for ensuring better learning outcome of their future citizens.

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Developing Learning Skills in the 21st Century Learners in Australia

There is a growing consensus that the 21st century skills, as they are often called, need to be cultivated to help students succeed in a modern society based on knowledge and innovation. The Development of skills is critical for education systems to produce holistically developed citizens who can learn most effectively in schools and with one another. There is an abundance of frameworks and agendas that outline the 21st century skills. In the context outlined here, the 21st century skills are defined as those ones which are considered particularly important to succeed in today's knowledge-based society where innovation and technology are predominant. These skills are anticipated to merge with students' knowledge in the key subject areas in the curriculum to enhance their learning.

In Australia, the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) has outlined the 21st century educational goals which include seven general capabilities such as, Literacy, Numeracy, ICT Capability, Critical and Creative Thinking, Personal and Social Capability, Ethical Understanding, and Intercultural Understanding. These capabilities sit in alignment with the curriculum, are addressed explicitly in the context of the key learning areas, with the intention that schools measure and report on the development of these capabilities.

Similar approaches to integrate skills into education systems are being adopted globally. The 21st century skills are rapidly emerging as expected learning outcome of schooling across the globe. A new set of resources developed by experts at the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) aims at providing an evidence-based approach to developing skills in students in schools. ACER's approach to skill development is underpinned by identification of three evident needs: understanding development, monitoring growth and ensuring alignment. Through a combination of skill development frameworks, levels of skill development and curriculum-orientated assessment and teaching tools, ACER aims at equipping teachers to measure and monitor these skills in their classroom, and better develop the same in their students. The first set of skills investigated were critical thinking, creative thinking and collaboration. Proficiency in these skills is highly valued within educational and professional settings. It has been envisaged that the skills can be improved through teaching and interventions, and can be measured and monitored. For each of the selected skills, levels of skill development are used to describe how growth can be demonstrated, and how students would move from early, to more advanced application and understandings. It will also support teachers to identify gaps in a learning area, where some students may need further assistance.

Strong links between curriculum, assessment, and pedagogy have also been established for development of resources that have been tested at the classroom level. ACER has been trialling its resources in schools across Australia and has multiple initiatives in which educators can engage with their research. A series of master classes has been developed (now available for online delivery), and there is also a General Capabilities Research Community with a quarterly newsletter

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Learning Outcome of Children in China with Special Focus on the First Compulsory Education Quality Monitoring Report

It is heartening that China has shown remarkable progress in provisioning of schooling access to its children. Recently a report has also indicated that there is a considerable improvement in learning achievement of the children. The Basic Education Quality Monitoring Center of the Ministry of Education of China has released its first report on the Quality Monitoring of Compulsory Education in China, which presents and puts forward relevant suggestions for further improvement of school education in China.

The report points out that monitoring data shows that Chinese students in compulsory education have positive life value orientation and good behaviour norms. They perform well in singing, but their listening ability, basic knowledge of fine arts and appreciation ability need to be improved. In compulsory education, students spend too much time on homework, participate in extra-curricular remedial classes, and undergo considerable learning pressure. Students immensely like the school course, but they find the class period and content arrangement of some courses not reasonable. Some teachers need to improve their exploring teaching ability and professional quality. The school has a strong cultural atmosphere and a good educational environment, as the report revealed. The schools are adequately equipped with teaching resources but the utilisation rate of resources needs improvement. Parents generally pay attention to their children's learning but they need to improve parent-child communication and education methods.

Taking the school work burden of students as an example, it has been found that the proportion of students who spent one hour on Mathematics and Chinese is higher than those who spent more than two hours. For example, while 14.7 percent and 21.5 percent of fourth-grade students spent more than 60 minutes, around 4.4 percent and 8.7 percent of students spent more than two hours on Mathematics and Chinese respectively. Some students also reportedly attended classes after their school hours. While 43.8 percent and 37.4 percent of fourth-grade students attended Mathematics and Chinese respectively after-school classes, 23.4 percent and 17.1 percent of eighth-grade students attended these classes.

Based on the monitoring results, the report puts forward some suggestions from the following aspects: improving the working mechanism of moral education, supplementing the shortcomings of physical education and aesthetic education, deepening the reform of education and teaching, reducing students' heavy schoolwork burden, strengthening the construction of teachers, improving the utilisation rate of teaching resources, and improving the family education guidance system.

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The next issue of The ANTRIEP Newsletter (January-June 2020) will focus on the theme **"Teachers and Teaching in Schools"**

Schooling and Learning in India

Learners' achievement is widely acknowledged as an important indicator of the quality of education provided at any level ranging from pre-primary to higher education. Bridging of learning gaps is considered as the cornerstone of educational reform across the globe and, therefore, almost all policies and programmes have already recommended various strategies for learners' assessment as also for improving their achievement levels which determine their grade promotion and completion of education as well.

The focus on learning outcome is not new in India as almost all educational commissions and committees have expressed several concerns about poor performance of students and recommended for corrective measures for its improvisation. The Kothari Commission on Education (1964-66) has recommended making evaluation a continuous process in order to improve the learning standards of children. The National Policy on Education, 1986 and its Programme of Action, 1992 have recommended for universal schooling access with success. The Minimum Level of Learning (MLL) was also introduced later to create a comparable standard of learning outcome for improving the quality of education at the elementary level under which a strategy of competency-based teaching and learning was developed.

Subsequently, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), the centrally sponsored scheme of the Government of India which has been undergoing for universalisation of elementary education since 2001 also focussed majorly on improvement of quality of education at elementary level. This scheme became a vehicle of implementation of the Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009 which has been enforced since 2010 by the Government for making education a fundamental right for children of the 6-14 years' age-group. The continuous and comprehensive evaluation, along with no detention policy, was introduced as per the recommendation of the RTE Act to promote learning level of children without the stress of failure and dropout. Like elementary education, improvement of quality of education was also one of the objectives of Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), the centrally sponsored scheme for Universalisation of Secondary Education. It was initiated in 2009 with a strong emphasis on improvement of learning outcome of students at the secondary and higher secondary levels. In addition to these national level initiatives, several states have also initiated different learning enhancement programmes together with implementation of national schemes.

The recent-most programme - the Samagra Shiksha -is being implemented by the Central and State Governments from pre-school to Grade XII which intends to improve school effectiveness ensuring equal opportunities for schooling and equitable learning outcome for all children. This programme has also been supported by the recently introduced National Policy on Education, 2020, which plays a key role in creation of Atmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India). This new policy has emphasised on development of a new structure of school education according importance to pre-primary and early grade schooling as the foundational stage of education. Like earlier policies and programmes, this new policy too has an overall thrust on learners and their learning outcome for which it has recommended for implementation of foundational literacy and numeracy mission at this formative stage of schooling.

Despite these policy initiatives and implementation of different schemes as mentioned above, the learning outcome of children is still a matter of concern and far from satisfactory. According to the recent-most report of ASER 2019, the gap between expectations and ground realities starts from the early years of schooling which

needs an urgent action. As per the UDISE data (2016-17), the pass percentage among children of Grade V was found as high as around 99 percent for both boys and girls during the same academic year indicating high passing rates of fifth graders. But, out of these, only around 62 percent children could secure 60 percent marks in this examination indicating inadequate learning for many children.

An inverse relationship has been observed between grades of learners and their performance. The overall pass percentages were much lower for the students attending the higher grades. While, it was around 80 percent for the students who appeared for the Grade X examination, it was about 83 percent for those who appeared for the Grade XII examination in the year of 2015-16. The National Achievement Survey (2017), conducted by NCERT, also revealed that more than 60 percent children of Grade III were able to answer correctly in language, Mathematics and EVS, while the percentage was hovering between 50-60 percent for children of Grade V in these subjects. The learners' performance declined further in Grades VIII and X. While, the proportion of children who could pass was recorded 56 percent in language, 42 percent in Mathematics, 44 percent in Science and 43 percent in Social Science for Grade VIII children, it was only 49 percent in Modern Indian Language and below 40 percent in English, Mathematics, Science and Social Science for the students of Grade X.

A recent study undertaken by NIEPA on school participation of children (2019) and conducted in six different states of India has also revealed that even after attending eight years of elementary education, a huge number of children could not acquire the fundamental skills in subjects like English, Mathematics and mother tongue, especially Hindi, due to various reasons, including their long absenteeism from school. However, this study has also pointed out that it is possible to improve children's performance through targeted, effective and collective initiatives of different stakeholders and teachers. Simultaneous improvement in systemic management and school management can bring about desired results as far as learning is concerned. It has been found that in addition to capacity building of teachers and child- centred teaching learning process, the day-to-day functioning of individual schools also needs adequate attention. Strengthening of physical and academic infrastructure of schools, safe and attractive school environment, availability, enrichment and use of Grade-specific teaching- learning materials, implementation of innovative teaching methods, involvement of parents and community, equal treatment of children, effective classroom management, frequent monitoring of schools by higher level functionaries and experts in order to provide support to teachers, etc. are some of those strategies which could improve the school functioning as well as learners' performance in sustainable manner. Implementation of these strategies seems to be of utmost importance for ensuring teaching-learning process required for imparting the 21st century learning skills among students.

As the New Education Policy, 2020 envisages for improvising learning outcome of children starting from the pre-schooling stage, it will be possible to ensure equal footing as well as a strong foundation for all the school going children thus making their fundamental right to education a reality in the foreseeable future.

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Learning Outcome at Elementary Stage in India

Ensuring an inclusive and equitable quality education for lifelong learning is the key to success of all the goals under the Global Agenda for Sustainable Development. Different initiatives at the national and state levels in India, over the last few decades, have helped in improving access and enrolments significantly; however, quality education continues to be the major concern. For quality attainment, it needs to be ensured that all children learn and have the opportunity to acquire skills needed to become global citizens. The National Education Policy, 2020, in addition to access and equity, also emphasises on accountability in the education system to bring improvement in its quality. This requires not just setting clear goals to allow for the tracking and monitoring for bridging the gaps that remain but also to bring in systemic and pedagogical reforms in assessment and evaluation.

The policy directives under National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986 and Programme of Action (POA), 1992 required that the essential levels of learning are laid down and children's achievement should periodically be assessed to keep track of their learning progress. In view of the priority of overall development of a child through education as per the Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, enacted now as a fundamental right, the Minimum Levels of Learning (a set of class-wise and subject-wise competencies defined by the NCERT) at the Primary Stage (1991) recognised the difficulty of dealing with the non-cognitive areas in it. To address this and recognising the constructivist paradigm with the implementation of the National Curriculum Framework (NCF), 2005, the learning outcomes need to be such that they tap the learning progress both qualitatively and quantitatively. Thus, taking cognizance of and the priorities of the Twelfth Five Year Plan and the recent Joint Review Mission recommendation laying emphasis on improving learning outcomes for all children, the NCERT developed class-wise learning outcomes for the elementary stage

Defining the learning outcomes is one step in a series of reforms that are needed to address the quality issues in education. The recent National Achievement Survey, 2017 shows an exponential decline in accomplishment of learning outcomes from early stages to upper primary level, which is a matter of grave concern for all stakeholders. This makes it imperative that the gaps in learning and curriculum need to be identified timely and systematically in order to take appropriate corrective measures and help children improve their learning and progress.

The NEP, 2020 seeks the classroom transactions to be shifted towards competency-based learning and assessment to be aligned with 'as', 'of', and 'for' learning with promoting learning as the prime purpose to close the gap in achievement of learning outcomes. Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE), recommended as a school-based system of assessment by different policy documents from time-to-time and mandated under Section 29(2) of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, can be an effective and potent tool, to help teachers, parents/ guardians and children themselves take charge of their learning and development. Thus, a major challenge lies in building the capacity of the stakeholders at the school level, especially the teachers.

Aiming at the overall development (physical, socio-emotional besides the cognitive) of a child the Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) envisages assessment as an integral component of teaching-learning. The RTE Act recommends reducing

stress on children by allowing teachers to identify learning gaps timely and address them suitably by gathering information on different skills, concerns, values, attitudes and sensitivities besides knowledge aspects in a continuous manner. Thus, CCE imbibes the ethos of child-friendly, learner-centred, inclusive and equitable teaching-learning and assessment. The RTE Act which requires the respective academic authorities to lay down the guidelines for curriculum and evaluation procedures up to elementary stage, the NCERT developed a set of common CCE guidelines (2019) on CCE to enable different stakeholders to understand and use CCE effectively.

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Learning Outcome in Indian Schools: Policies and Initiatives for Improvement

Learning outcome as a complex and multi-dimensional construct composed of three dimensions: cognitive, skill-based and attitudinal outcomes. The assessment of learning informs the level of learning by taking into consideration learners' characteristics, learning environment and teaching-learning experiences. Outcome-based assessment focuses on the assessment process which must be aligned with the learning outcomes. In India, various interventions were introduced by both central and state Governments to enhance teaching and learning. The Education Commission (1964-66) and Kothari Commission (1968) focused on learning outcome by ensuring that every child who is enrolled in a school must successfully complete the prescribed course. As mentioned in earlier articles, the National Policy on Education, 1986 and subsequent programmes i.e. District Primary Education Programme (DPEP, 1994), Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (2001), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (2009) and currently Samagra Shiksha (2018) all have focused on improvement in learning outcome of the children and grade appropriate levels of learning.

The National Curricular Framework (NCF, 2005) as process-based reform was introduced for course content, and improving the teaching-learning experiences. In view of attainment of Sustainable Development Goal-4 (SDG-4), many initiatives were also introduced by the central government like subject-wise learning assessment in national achievement survey, grading system, integrated data (UDISE+), e-learning material for teachers and students, Rashtriya Aavishkar Abhiyan (RAA), interactive contents for students through e-Pathshala, MOOCs, Swayam Prabha, etc. In addition, some state level interventions i.e. ADARSH schools, Nali Kali, student achievement tracking system, state achievement survey in Karnataka; Activity Based Learning (ABL) in Tamil Nadu, Gunotsav and extra coaching programme in Gujarat; Shikshashree, Sabuj Sathi and Kanyashree in West Bengal; Muskaan Pustakalaya Yojna in Chhattishgqarh, etc. are being implemented. Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE), 2009 also focuses on learning achievement of children by articulating a non-negotiable learning environment and continuous and comprehensive evaluation.

The National Programme on School Standards and Evaluation (Shaala Siddhi) of MHRD, a school-based intervention for school self-evaluation was initiated in 2015 to improve student learning outcomes of 1.5 million, vast and diversified schools. The objective

of developing school-based learning outcomes is to understand the subject specific teaching and learning in terms of pedagogy, materials, and assessment. The New Education Policy (2020) not only has the major focus on learning and its outcome, by stressing on children's ability to learn but also, how to learn. More specifically, it has emphasised on equipping students with the 21st century learning skills; much needed for development of best gainful manpower by 2040.

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Learning Outcome in Schools: Issues and Initiatives for Improvement in South Korea

Korea is well known as a country with high learning outcomes. Korea is one of the top performers among OECD countries in reading, mathematics, and science in all seven Programmes for International Student Assessment (PISA) results from 2000 to 2018. Moreover, PISA results show that socio-economic background of Korean students had less impact on their performance than other OECD countries, and the academic achievement gap between the highest and the lowest performers in Korea is narrowing.

Although international comparisons indicate that Korea outperforms other OECD countries, there still exist educational issues in terms of learning outcome in Korea. The number of students who fail to meet the basic learning skills standards is rapidly increasing, and the achievement gap between low- and high-performing students is also widening. Those problems are inextricably interwoven and strongly related to one another.

The problems are caused by polarisation of education fever, elimination of the national level academic achievement test, and partially by COVID-19. First, the cooling group of education fever who is indifferent to their children's education has skyrocketed, and most of them are from low-income backgrounds, which resulted in widening the achievement gap. Considering the relationship between performance and socio-economic backgrounds become strongly correlated more and more, the achievement gap between students in high- and low-income families has widened as the income gap between high- and low-income families have also widened. Trends for International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) results show that learning outcome is influenced by socio-economic background of students in Korea. Although international comparisons indicate that Korea outperforms other OECD countries, but there is a decline in the standard of basic learning ability.

Second, national level academic achievement test was eliminated as a part of the Free Semester System, and the students are not tested until the second grade of middle school. The Free Semester System is a system that focuses on a variety of experiential activities that enable students to develop their aptitudes and allowing them to stay away from the competition for one or two semesters in middle school by freeing them from tests. Such a system caused a side-effect of an increase in achievement gap and a decline in students' basic academic skills.

Third, recent COVID-19 crisis is exacerbating existing inequalities in learning outcome as well. Rapid implementation of ad-hoc online learning programmes during the school closure is adding another layer of

inequality for disadvantaged students. Disadvantaged students who lack the essentials – such as devices and guardians – to master online learning programmes at home are falling further behind their affluent peers. This leads to learning loss and widening in achievement gap and bring about lowering learning outcome in schools eventually.

To mitigate such issues and increase learning outcomes, the Korean government is initiating several policies. First, the Basic Learning Accountability Instruction in reading, writing, and maths for the first grade in elementary school was implemented from the beginning of 2020 in order to prevent learning loss. In addition, Do Dream School – a team supported by multiple teachers and counselling teachers – will be intensively applied to the first and third graders in elementary school who are falling behind. Second, professional development for teachers in reading, writing, and maths has been initiated since 2020. More than 15 percent of elementary teachers will be trained for 15 hours each year in addition to their regular 60-hour training in teaching basic skills such as literacy and basic mathematics. Further, an attempt to enhance basic learning skills and increase learning outcome will take place by disseminating elementary mathematics content using AI games. Third, by enacting the Basic Learning Skills Guarantee Act, the Korean government aims to ensure equality of educational opportunities for all, improve the utilisation of the diagnosis-correction system for basic learning skills, and include teaching basic learning skills to teacher education curriculum

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Learning Outcome in Schools: Issues and Initiatives for Improvement in Nepal

The government of Nepal has been making efforts for bringing improvement in learning outcomes of students in schools through decentralised management of education, interventions in teacher development and implementation of a continuous assessment system. The Department of Education researched on 'Study on Factors of Student Learning Achievements and Dynamics for Better Learning Conditions: A case study focused to grade five in some selected schools' in 2017 that covered 12 schools from 6 districts. The study showed that the schools with high learning achievement were found to have practiced: an operational calendar, forming parent-teacher association, holding high expectation on student learning achievement, purposive leadership, selecting competent teachers, emphasising teacher training, administering frequent tests and remedial teaching.

In Nepal, Education Review Office (ERO), under the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST), started the National Assessment of Student Achievement (NASA) to study the status of student achievement, suggest measures for improvement, and provide evidence and policy feedback to the system. ERO has been conducting NASA on different subjects and grades since 2011. In 2018, ERO assessed the learning outcomes of Grade V in Mathematics and Nepali language where 28381 students, 1400 teachers, 1400 head teachers from 1400 schools participated. The Report showed that in Mathematics, 32 students out of 100 fall below basic level achieving only 5 percent of the tested curriculum. Basic level students achieved only 28 percent of curriculum. It was found that more than 70 percent students achieved below 28 percent in the tested curriculum, which indicates that a huge number of

students are underperforming in this subject. Similarly, in Nepali language, 20 out of 100 students achieved only 18 percent and 40 out of 100 students achieved only 38 percent of the tested curriculum. Forty-five students out of 100 have adequate knowledge and skills of tested curriculum as 30 percent of students fall in proficient level and 15 percent in advance level. Altogether, 55 percent of the students were found underperforming in the tests in the Nepali language.

The School Sector Development Plan (SSDP, 2016-23) has specific interventions for improving quality of education. These include supply of trained teachers, teaching-learning materials, and enabling education environment in the schools. Further, Plan has emphasised on implementing Continuous Assessment System (CAS), practice of standardised testing of children, child-centred activity-based teaching teaching-learning, focus on early grade reading (Grades I-III), remedial teaching, provisions for Prioritized Minimum Enabling Conditions (PMEC), including the adequate supply of subject-wise teachers.

The government of Nepal has attempted to improve learning outcomes by implementing the SSDP for ensuring equitable access to quality education for all. Development of National Curriculum Framework, revised school curriculum and textbooks, integrated curriculum and textbooks for early grades, teacher student support materials, implementation of National Early Grade Reading Program (NEGRP), development of Teacher Competency Framework and Teacher Professional Development (TPD) Framework, establishment of model schools, setting up ICT labs and libraries in most of the secondary schools, provision of mother tongue-based multilingual education are among some of the significant efforts made by the government.

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The Culture of Testing and Solution to Alleviate in Learning Outcome of School Students in Vietnam

"Culture of testing" is growing steadily in the Asia-Pacific region as many countries consider improving academic achievement as a focus and measure of educational effectiveness. While the existence of examinations is justified by the policy of improving the quality of education, the emphasis on "high scores" has led to the ranking and labelling of students, teachers, and schools based on the results of high-stakes exams. In this way, high-stakes exams have made some countries turn away from important educational goals such as ethics, citizenship awareness, sense of responsibility, etc., especially "preparing students to participate in social life and develop a healthy personal life."

To outline the "culture of testing" in Vietnam, three groups of factors are analysed as follows: education (education system, curricula, modes of teacher training, evaluation and assessment of educational outcomes, educational quality, etc.); family (traditions of the family and lineage, conceptions of and time spent in children' learning, etc.); culture - society (Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism; customs, traditions, spiritualism, beliefs,

religions, etc.). In those factors, 'Culture' refers to tangible (such as behaviour, customs, practices) and intangibles (beliefs, attitudes, values) elements and characteristics that constitute the differences between countries; 'Exam' refers to two crucial exams that may decide an individual's future life: high school graduation exam and university entrance exam.

Some of the research findings are summarised as follows:

i) Vietnam is deeply influenced by Confucianism. In terms of socio-politics, Vietnam's education has transformed from a state monopoly model to a multi-component model, while integrating into the world in a comprehensive manner (economy, culture, society and education). The constituents of the "culture of testing" in Vietnamese society have the following characteristics:

- People have fondness for learning because of the deep belief that 'diligence compensates for the lack of intelligence', 'where there's a will there's a way', or 'practice makes perfect'; assessment and examination are considered a key stage to achieve a breakthrough to renovate education; and always expect fair, objective and accurate assessment and evaluation; there are many educational policies related to the quality of education, education equity, and meritocratic environment; etc.
- Since the education system in Vietnam is primarily achievement-driven, 'degree-driven' and exam-oriented, excessive tutoring, shadow education, cheating in exams when possible etc. are common phenomena along with increasing inequality in learning outcomes.

ii) 'Culture of testing' has created shortcomings in the activities of teachers and schools: more time spent on teaching both inside and outside the classroom only to do mock exams, not paying adequate attention to training core skills to explore, develop thinking or apply knowledge into practice for students; narrowing the scope of implementation of the Grade XII curriculum; forcing students and teachers to achieve the school's achievement targets; etc.

iii) 'Culture of testing' has created a positive influence on students such as: to be motivated, determined to learn in a self-conscious, proactive and responsible manner; the more difficult the family's background is, the higher is the student's desire to study; to always receive advice and career guidance from parents, teachers; to be competitive, resilient, adaptive, and strive to achieve high scores, increasing their chances of success for the future; etc. On the other hand, an 'exam-oriented', 'degree-driven', and 'family honour' culture has put pressure on students, as they have to learn relentlessly, achieve high scores, get into college to bring joy and pride to parents, teachers, and families, school and honour to the homeland.

iv) The above issues present Vietnam with four main challenges:

- Assessment, evaluation, and examination are difficult to ensure accuracy, objectivity, fairness and integrity;
- Difficulty in reaching a consensus of understanding of outcomes' standards of the curriculum, implementation of the educational curriculum, and the competency-based assessment of learners according to the outcomes' standards;
- Innovation in assessment towards competency-based assessment requires adequate financial and human resources; and
- Improving the quality of holistic education is always the top priority of the national policies, but it is difficult to achieve this goal in Vietnam's context of 'Culture of testing'.

v) A number of solutions to alleviate the 'Culture of testing':

- *For the administration of education at the Central level:* To persistently implement the policy of robust streaming process post-lower secondary and post-high schools with appropriate education policies; to manage and monitor the quality of education by implementing a variety of competency-based assessment modes and methods; and to build a mechanism of sanctions to strictly handle cheatings in evaluation, assessment and examination.

- *For authorities at the local and school levels:* To implement correctly and adequately the full scope of the educational curriculum; to innovate teaching methods and in-class teaching activities to develop competencies for students; to develop item bank; to create a safe, healthy and friendly educational environment in the school which is 'all for students' and 'every teacher is a shining example for students to follow'; to set up funds for learning and scholarships to encourage students to learn; to create jobs for students after high school, graduation; etc.

- *For family and community:* Do not impose the pressure of 'high achievement', but encourage children to 'strive to be better'; do not reinforce the idea of 'exam-oriented', and direct children to a holistic education; do not take advantage of social relationships to obtain improper benefits for one's own child; to create learning promotion funds, funds for poor students in overcoming difficulties, etc., to encourage and reward children with excellent results under difficult circumstances.

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News from ANTRIEP Member-Institutions (July-December, 2019)

Campaign for Popular Education

Bangladesh

- A meeting of campaigners, teachers, students and guardians with some women MPs on "Empowering Girls: Promoting Rights & Justice" was held on 26 August, 2019 at the YWCA Auditorium in Dhaka, organised by CAMPE.

- A ten-member civil society delegation from CAMPE met Ms. Alice Albright, the CEO of Global Partnership for Education (GPE) on 10 September, 2019 at a hotel in Dhaka. Ms. Albright visited Bangladesh from 07-12 September, 2019 and met decision-makers, senior government officials, CSOs and other stakeholders.

- A Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) together with UNESCO Dhaka Office, under the leadership of Ministry of Education (MoE), Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MOPME) and Bangladesh National Commission for UNESCO (BNCU), in cooperation with IDEA, organised a Sub-national Consultation on SDG 4 Strategic Framework (SDG 4-SF) for Bangladesh on 25 November, 2019.

- CAMPE, in cooperation with Save the Children and Friendship, organised a sharing session on "Empowering Girls through Education (EGE)" on 30 October, 2019 at the Six Seasons Hotel, Gulshan.

- Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) organised a Sharing Meeting with Teachers Association on "Empowering Girls through ICT in Education (EGE)" on 23 December, 2019 at CAMPE Training Hall, Dhaka.

Korean Educational Development Institute

Korea

- KEDI Journal of Educational Policy Vol. 16 No. 1 was published on 28 June, 2019.

- A delegation of the educational experts visited the library, KEDI on 03 July, 2019 to share education policy and discuss future plans for cooperation.

- A delegation of the Ministry of Education of the F.D.R. of Ethiopia visited KEDI on 10 July, 2019 to share Korea's experience related to education policy for the project to develop a roadmap in Ethiopia.

- A delegation of the Ministry of Education in Nicaragua visited KEDI on 06 August, 2019 to learn about know-how related to education facilities in Korea.

- UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Education, Stefania Giannini visited President's Office, KEDI on 03 September, 2019 to expand educational cooperation between UNESCO and KEDI.

- A visit to the President Office, KEDI was made by the delegates from Mongolian University of Science and Technology on 03 September, 2019

National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration

New Delhi, INDIA

- A National Workshop on Qualitative Research Methods and Policy Analysis in Education was held during 01-12 July, 2019 at NIEPA, New Delhi.

- A Workshop on Structure and Functioning of Educational Administration in UTs was held during 22-23 July, 2019 at NIEPA, New Delhi.

- A Programme on Leadership in Educational Administration for Academic Administrators in Universities and Colleges was organised during 24-26 July, 2019 at NIEPA, New Delhi.

- A two-day "Workshop on Orientation to School Leadership Academies on their Implementation Plan, 2019-20" was held on 30-31 July, 2019 at NIEPA, New Delhi.

- A "Workshop on Innovations and Good Practices in Institutional Governance of Higher Education" was organised during 19-21 August, 2019 at NIEPA, New Delhi.

- A "Workshop for Finalisation of Modules on Privatisation in Higher Education and Financing of Higher Education" was held during 16-20 September, 2019 at NIEPA, New Delhi.

- A "Workshop on Systemic Reforms for Management of Quality Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in India" was organised during 21-23 October, 2019 at NIEPA, New Delhi.

- A one-month "Programme on Certificate Course in School Leadership and Management (Induction Programme for School Heads)" was organised by NCSL, NIEPA during December 2019.

Vietnam Academy of Educational Sciences

Vietnam

- The National Academy of Public Administration cooperated with the Vietnam Academy of Educational Sciences to hold the Closing Ceremony of Leadership and Room-level Management Training for Leadership and equivalent managers on 31 December, 2019.

- In order to enhance and promote the role of specialised units operating in the field of Psychology and Special Education, the signing ceremony of a memorandum of understanding between the National Center for Special Education, the Vietnam Institute of Educational Science and the Institute of Clinical Psychology (under the Vietnam Psychological Association) was launched on 19 December, 2019 at the Vietnam Academy of Educational Sciences.

- Vietnam Institute of Educational Science, in collaboration with Medical University Pham Ngoc Thach- City. Ho Chi Minh City organised a graduation ceremony on 14 December, 2019, for the language therapy course in children from October 2018 to August 2019.

- The second Seminar on Education for students with developmental disorders on improving the quality of the educational model for students with developmental disorders was organized by the Vietnam Institute of Educational Science and Angel's Haven (Korea) Private Center Support for Disability Inclusion in Hanoi (ICC) was co-organised at La Thanh Hotel during 28-29 November, 2019.

- Vietnam Institute of Educational Science, UNICEF and Little Lives jointly organised an "International Workshop on Improving the Quality of Pre-school Education in a Digital Age" at the Ha Noi Academy International Bilingual School on 26 September, 2019.

- The National Center for Sustainable Development of Quality of General Education organized a launching ceremony of the online education portal hocsinh.edu.vn which was held on 19 September, 2019 at Hoa Binh Hotel, Hanoi. The ceremony attracted the participation of educational managers, researchers, teachers, parents, students, and media agencies.

ISSN 0972-7507

ANTRIEP Member Institutions

1. Academy of Educational Planning and Management (AEPAM), Ministry of Education, Taleemi Chowk, G-8/1, P.O. Box 1566, ISLAMABAD, Pakistan (http:/aepam.edu.pk)
2. Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), 19 Prospect Hill Road, Private Bag-55, Camberwell, Melbourne, VICTORIA-3124, Australia (www.acer.edu.au)
3. Balitbang Dikbud Centre for Policy Research (Puslit Penelitian), Office for Educational and Culture Research and Development (Balitbang Dikb), Ministry of Education and Culture, Jalan Jenderal Sudirman, Senayan, JAKARTA-12041, Indonesia. (www.kemdikbud.go.id)
4. Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), 75, Mohakhali Commercial Area, DHAKA-1212, Bangladesh (www.brac.net)
5. Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), 5/14, Humayun Road, Mohammadpur, DHAKA-1207, Bangladesh (www.campebd.org)
6. Centre for Multi-Disciplinary Development Research (CMDR), D. B. Rodda Road, Jubilee Circle, DHARWARD-380001, Karnataka (INDIA) (www.cmdr.co.in)
7. Centre for Education Leadership Development (CELD), National Institute of Education (NIE), Meepe Junction, PADUKKA, Sri Lanka (www.nie.lk)
8. Institute Aminuddin Baki (National Institute of Educational Management), Ministry of Education, Sri Layang 69000, Genting Highland, PAHANG-69000, Malaysia
9. International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP), 7-9 rue Eugene-Delacroix, 75116 PARIS, France (www.iiep.unesco.org)
10. Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI), 92-6 Umyeon-Dong, Seocho-Gu, SEOUL 137-791 Korea (www.kedi.re.kr)
11. National Academy for Educational Management (NAEM), Dhanmodi, DHAKA–1205, Bangladesh (www.naem.gov.bd)
12. National Centre for Educational Development (NCED), Sanothimi, BHAKTAPUR-2050, Nepal (www.nced.gov.np)
13. National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), 17-B, Sri Aurobindo Marg, NEW DELHI-110016 (INDIA) (www.ncert.nic.in)
14. National Institute of Education (NIE), 123, Preah Norodom Blvd, PHOM PENH, Cambodia (www.nie.edu.kh)
15. National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA), 17-B, Sri Aurobindo Marg, NEW DELHI–110016, (INDIA) (www.niepa.ac.in)
16. Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development, Tribhuvan University, P.O. Box 2161, Balkhu, KATHMANDU, Nepal (www.cerid.org)
17. Shanghai Institute of Human Resource Development (SIHRD), 21 North Cha Ling North Road, SHANGHAI-200032, China
18. South-East Asian Ministers of Education Organisation Regional Centre for Educational Innovation and Technology, SEAMEO- INNOTECH P.O. Box 207, Commonwealth Avenue, U.P. Diliman, QUEZON CITY 1101, Philippines (www.seameo-innotech.org)
19. State Institute of Educational Management & Training (SIEMAT), 25 P.C. Banerjee Road, Allenganj, PRAYAGRAJ, Uttar Pradesh (INDIA) (www.siematup.org)
20. The Aga Khan Education Service, Pakistan (AKES,P) House Nos.3 & 4, F-17/B, Block VII, KDA Scheme 5, Clifton, KARACHI-75600, Pakistan (www.akdn.org/akes)
21. The Aga Khan University - Institute for Educational Development, (AKU-IED), 1-5/B-VII, F. B. Area Karimabad, P.O. Box No.13688, KARACHI-75950, Pakistan (http://www.aku.edu)
22. Vietnam Institute of Educational Sciences (VNIES), 101, Tran Hung Dao-Hoan Kiem, HANOI, Vietnam (www.vnrw.vnies.edu.in)

Edited by Prof. Madhumita Bandyopadhyay on behalf of the Focal Point, ANTRIEP and published by the Registrar, National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, 17-B, Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi-110016. Processed/ printed by the Publication Unit, NIEPA at M/s Archna Printers, New Delhi-110020, India.