

Promises, challenges, and possibilities of open on-line learning

Policy Forum on Adult Learning and Education

18-20 December 2017, Bandung, Indonesia

By PEKKA Indonesia

ASPBAE President and Director of PEKKA, Nani Zulminarni, and 6 ASPBAE members in Indonesia participated in a Policy Forum on Adult Learning and Education in Bandung (West Java). ASPBAE's Cecilia (Thea) Soriano participated as a resource person at the forum.



The Policy Forum on Adult Learning and Education was held as a follow-up action to the SEAMEO-CELLL's initiative to harness lifelong learning policies and practices implemented in Southeast Asia.

The forum was organised by the Ministry of Education and the Centre for Development of Early Childhood, Non-Formal and Informal Education, Bandung (Jayagiri Centre). It was held as a follow-up action related to the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation-Center for Lifelong Learning's (SEAMEO-CELLL) initiative to harness lifelong learning policies and practices implemented across Southeast Asia.

The policy forum stressed that quality adult learning and education (ALE) should not only be marked by the involvement of multilayered stakeholders but should also be manifested in concrete measures and interventions of both learners and teachers. Current technological advances make it possible for ALE to be delivered anytime, anywhere, and by any means that represent education in the view of (lifelong) learning. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) is an example of a distance learning programme and delivery that has been widely adopted. However, challenges in relation to access, quality, funding, recognition, and validation continue to shadow its provision. There are demands emphasising adult learners to be equipped with relevant and necessary skills for the 21st century.



ASPBAE's Thea Soriano participated in the policy forum in Bandung and where she emphasized the importance of including on-line learning as a component of a holistic approach to women's education and empowerment.

Participants emphasised that in the Indonesian context, one of the fastest growing open online learning programmes is an online course provided for teachers involved in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). Currently, there are close to 600,000 ECCE teachers spread across 190 thousand community-based centers in Indonesia who need Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and learning opportunities, especially since more than two-thirds of them do not hold a Bachelor's degree. The open on-line learning courses are effective and efficient in supporting their academic and professional development. For example, in 2016, more than 13,500 ECCE teachers were enrolled in an open learning courses. This number will continue to double annually. In light of this rapid growth and increasing concerns over its quality, the Government of Indonesia organized the policy forum to develop a policy framework and guidelines for the on-line courses.

In her presentation, ASPBAE's Thea Soriano emphasised that for marginalised communities to benefit from the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and

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on-line courses, the digital divides should be addressed. She noted two such divides – access to ICT (infrastructure), and access to capacity building for marginalised learners to enable them to use and harness the potential of technology for learning and community development. Thea shared the experiences of some of ASPBAE's members such as Bunyad Foundation (Pakistan) and ASPPUK (Indonesia) where on-line learning is a component of a holistic approach to women's education and empowerment.

Participants of the policy forum produced a set of recommendations. Some highlights of those recommendations were – (1) Improving the quality of learning mechanisms, structures, and use of technology;

(2) Expanding the role of non-formal education and community learning centres to provide effective on-line learning and capacity advancement; (3) Capacity building of learners, educators, and managers involved in the on-line courses for better services; (4) Developing and synchronising open learning policies with regulations from national and local governments and in line with SDG 4; (5) Scaling up on-line courses to other places, both in urban and rural settings; (6) Enlarging networking and funding with government institutions from various sectors and collaboration with NGOs; (7) Material development for various, interesting on-line learning based on local contexts; and (8) Localising lifelong learning frameworks to suit different situations in the Indonesian context.

ASPBAE's Indonesia members strongly urged government officials at the forum to ensure that its programmes on on-line learning benefit marginalised sectors that need education, learning, and information the most. Representatives from PEKKA highlighted that it would explore how on-line learning can be used for capacity building of its women educators across the different districts in Indonesia. The Jayagiri Center opened its doors for collaboration with ASPBAE's members on further discussions on youth and adult education and on-line learning.

The ASPBAE members from Indonesia at the forum were - Centre for Community Development and Education (CCDE); Network for Education Watch Indonesia (NEW Indonesia); Association For Women In Small Business Assistance (ASPPUK); Institut KAPAL Perempuan; Center for Women's Resources Development (Pusat Pengembangan Sumberdaya Wanita (PPSW); and PEKKA (Perempuan Kepala Keluarga) or 'Women Headed Family Empowerment'.

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