



ASPBAE co-organises International Policy Forum on Lifelong Learning

18 February 2016, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

By Batjargal Batkhuyag, ASPBAE Executive Council member representing East Asia, and representative of the Mongolian Education Alliance



The Policy Forum on Lifelong Learning was held at relevant moment amidst vociferous debate and formulation of the National Programme on Lifelong Learning in Mongolia.

ASPBAE co-organised an International Policy Forum on Lifelong Learning along with the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science of Mongolia and the Mongolian Education Alliance. Representatives from the central and local government, civil society, and international organisations participated in the Forum. The event was held at a relevant moment amidst vociferous debate and formulation of the National Programme on Lifelong Learning (LLL) in Mongolia.

ASPBAE Secretary-General, Maria Khan, and Director of the Strategic Policy and Planning Department, Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science, Nasanbayar Baavgai, gave the opening remarks at the Forum. The remarks emphasised the importance of the Forum in translating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the education goal (SDG 4), and the lifelong learning concept to the national context in Mongolia.

Nasanbayar Baavgai presented an overview of current reforms of the education sector in the country and the National Programme on LLL to be implemented from 2016-2021. The national programme will be the first to incorporate a policy document to develop a lifelong learning system and culture that supports life-long learners, happy families, and sustainable development. The three components of the programme are – (1) development of the lifelong learning system - curriculum development for various target groups, research, training, and financing, (2) coordination - support to local initiatives, inter-sectoral coordination and collaboration, and (3) validation - accreditation, recognition, and institutionalisation.



The opening remarks of ASPBAE Secretary-General, Maria Khan, and Nasanbayar Baavgai of the Ministry of Education, Mongolia, emphasised the importance of the Forum in translating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the education goal (SDG4), and the lifelong learning concept to the national context of Mongolia.



Nasanbayar Baavgai of the Ministry of Education, Mongolia, presented an overview of current reforms of the education sector in the country and the National Programme on LLL to be implemented from 2016-2021.

An ASPBAE panel addressed the topic of *'Concretising SDG4 in our policy and practice: Lessons from ASPBAE and its partners'* and was chaired by ASPBAE President, Jose Roberto (Robbie) Guevara. Robbie providing an overview of the SDGs and SDG4 and the centrality of the lifelong learning within them. The panellists were then asked to share their experiences of lifelong learning both personally and from the contexts they come from. ASPBAE Executive Council member representing Southeast Asia, Dina Lumbantobing, spoke about what SDG 4 means for work on gender and education from the experience of PESADA (an Indonesia-based NGO working on women's empowerment, ethnic minorities, and children) and the women's movement in Indonesia. ASPBAE



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ASPBAE President, Jose Roberto (Robbie) Guevara, chaired an ASPBAE panel on 'Concretising SDG4 in our policy and practice: Lessons from ASPBAE and its partners'.

Executive Council member representing South and Central Asia, Dominic D'Souza of LAYA (a resource centre for indigenous communities based in southern India), talked about what SDG 4 means for work on equity and inclusion from the experience of LAYA with focus on their work around climate change.

Dorothy Lucardie of Adult Learning Australia shared learnings from policy experiences, challenges, and opportunities in Australia. Uwe Gartenschlaeger of DVV International talked about learnings from a long tradition of policy experience in Germany and Europe.

Participants were then divided into 3 groups to brainstorm on issues related to policy, practice, and coordination of lifelong learning. In Group 1, the participants discussed lifelong learning policy. The discussion was facilitated by ASPBAE's Cecilia (Thea) Soriano and ASPBAE Executive Council member representing East Asia, Batjargal Batkhuyag of the Mongolian Education Alliance. Participants raised several issues and made suggestions for the lifelong learning programme in Mongolia. Some points made were -

- Civil society organisations conduct a lot of activities within the lifelong learning framework, but this is not depicted in national statistics. Data and statistics should capture the enormous amount of work various civil society organisations do.
- In considering a lifelong learning programme, it is important to focus on traditional knowledge, and to have a balance of knowledge and skills (not only cognitive skills). Rural/urban disparities need to be considered.
- Capacity of the local community in doing training, research, and other skills should be considered.
- The government needs to support civil society in formulating and implementing the lifelong learning framework. This should not only be financial assistance, but should also extend to coordination efforts. Teacher training and support to educators working in this area is needed.
- There needs to be recognition and validation of lifelong learning.
- The involvement of various stakeholders in policy development is needed.
- The National Programme on Lifelong Learning is a step towards instituting policies on LLL. But for this to be successful, it needs to have funding, and there needs to be coordination and collaboration of various stakeholders and local authorities.



Uwe Gartenschlaeger of DVV International participated in the ASPBAE Panel and talked about learnings from a long tradition of policy experience in Germany and Europe.

Group 2, facilitated by Bernie Lovegrove of ASPBAE and Tungalag Dondog of the 'All for Education' (AFE) Coalition, discussed the practices and implementation of lifelong learning. The main highlights of their discussion were –



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Issues -

- Lifelong learning is not understood, or financed, in rural areas.
- Lifelong learning centres in rural areas are seen only for training out-of-school children and youth, not adults.
- There is still no common understanding or synergy amongst the Ministry of Education, universities, and the National Centre for Lifelong Learning on implementing policies.
- Teachers and researchers lack the capacity to organise lifelong learning training and activities.



Dina Lumbantobing, ASPBAE Executive Council member representing Southeast Asia, spoke about what SDG 4 means for work on gender and education from the experience of PESADA.

Strategies -

- There is a need to change the perception of lifelong learning at all levels, including for the government, municipalities, and individuals.
- Civil society organisations need to define what they mean by lifelong learning to monitor quality standards.
- There is a need to share experiences, expertise, and good practices with civil society organisations and networks in the region.
- There should be incentives for those municipalities that support and promote lifelong learning.
- Collaboration with other sectors and ministries is crucial. The Ministry of Education should lead on this.
- Advocacy and raising awareness amongst citizens and decision-makers should be done in collaboration with civil society organisations.



Dominic D'Souza, ASPBAE Executive Council member representing South Asia, talked about what SDG 4 means for work on equity and inclusion from the experience of LAYA with focus on their work around climate change.

Group 3, facilitated by Helen Dabu of ASPBAE and Bolorsaikhan Badamsambuu of the 'All for Education' (AFE) Coalition, discussed lifelong learning coordination. Highlights of the discussions of Group 3 were –

- There is a lack of coordination among government agencies in charge of education, labour, finance, and human development and there is lack of collaboration among different sectors.
- Lifelong learning is understood in a very narrow context – as providing literacy and equivalency programmes to a few groups such as out-of-school children and youth, school dropouts, and convicts.
- There is a lack of involvement in lifelong learning from the academia.

The participations suggested the following to overcome the challenges and increase the effectiveness of lifelong learning initiatives –

- The Government is the primary duty bearer in realising the right to education. Participants proposed to set up a National Council, to be headed either by the President or the Prime Minister.



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- The National Centre for Lifelong Learning, currently under the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science, should be responsible for coordinating and implementing lifelong learning policies. It should serve as the Secretariat of the National Council providing technical assistance.
- The National Council should consist of representatives of the government, civil society, citizens, local authorities, international development partners, and other donor agencies.
- The primary responsibilities of the Council should range from the development of policies and programmes, to implementation and monitoring and evaluation.
- It is important for the National Centre for Lifelong Learning to collaborate with civil society and the private sector.



ASPBAE's Bernie Lovegrove (R) and Tungalag Dondog (L) of the 'All for Education' (AFE) Coalition, facilitated a group discussion on the practices and implementation of lifelong learning.



Members of AFE Mongolia participating in the Policy Forum and ASPBAE staff also discussed wrap-up activities of the coalition associated with the end of Phase 2 of the Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF).

In his closing remarks, Batjargal Batkhuyag expressed his gratitude to the Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture and to ASPBAE for co-organising the important and timely event that gathering various stakeholders to share and learn from one another. He also expressed hope that the Forum would raise awareness on lifelong learning, the SDGs, and the right to education and would also lead to action to concretise SDG4 at the national level.

Members of AFE Mongolia participating in the Policy Forum and ASPBAE staff took a moment to also discuss the wrap-up activities of the coalition associated with the end of Phase 2 of the Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF).

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