

ASPBAE convenes regional consultation on education financing, privatisation, and regulation

11-13 September 2017, Kathmandu, Nepal



The Regional Consultation was organised to share studies and country experiences on privatisation and regulation of private actors in education, and to discuss strategies to address privatisation

ASPBAE, in cooperation with National Coalition for Education Nepal (NCE Nepal), organised a three-day regional consultation in Kathmandu following the Global Meeting of the Privatisation in Education and Human Rights Consortium. The event, *Asia-Pacific Regional Consultation on Challenges in Education Financing, Privatisation and Regulation*, was attended by 30 participants composed of national coalition representatives, ASPBAE staff, and resource persons from the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) and the Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education (CLADE), and from partner organisations in the United States, United Kingdom, and Kenya.

The regional consultation was convened to share studies and country experiences on privatisation and regulation of private actors in education, and to discuss strategies to address the privatisation drive and, thus, ensure equity, inclusion, and the right to education for all, consistent with Sustainable Development Goal 4 and Education 2030. The consultation also aimed to draw feedback and comments on the latest draft of civil society initiated document on the Human Rights Guiding Principles on non-state actors in education. The consultation concluded with proposed strategies and actions at both national and regional levels to address issues related to financing, privatisation, and regulation in the education sector.

A panel of resource persons, speaking in the session on *Privatisation and Regulation Challenges*, shared privatisation issues and trends in Latin America, the US, and Kenya. Laura Giannecchini, Institutional Development Officer of CLADE, noted that less resources are going to the public systems, including education, and that Latin America and the Caribbean is the most privatised region compared to all other global regions. She cited Chile, where large-scale privatisation of education, starting in 1980, resulted from structural reform when the state transformed from provider to mere regulator, financier, and evaluator of the education system. Another trend noted was “education privatisation through disaster responses” which occurred in countries such as Haiti, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua, where low free private schools have proliferated as alternatives to schools damaged by disasters.



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Linda Odour-Noah, Project Lead of the East African Centre for Human Rights, particularly mentioned the Bridge Academies as the biggest commercial school in Kenya and in other African countries such as Uganda, Nigeria, and Liberia. She pointed out the aggressive drive of commercial chain schools in situations where regulation is weak and hardly enforced. Frank Adamson, Senior Policy and Research Analyst of Stanford Centre for Opportunity Policy in Education, compared education outcomes associated with education strategies as implemented in several states across the United States. He noted that market-based approaches showed declining achievement overall, and greater segregation and inequality in education access and outcomes. In contrast, higher public investment in education showed growing student achievement and more equity in access and outcomes.

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In the session on *Donor Policies and Financing of Low Fee Private Schools*, resource persons shared their insights and recommendations for better and principled funding of education services in developing countries. They noted the policies of financial institutions (World Bank and the Asian Development Bank in particular) and development agencies (UK's DFID as an example) in supporting private education institutions in developing countries. Takafumi Miyake, Secretary General of Japan NGO Network for Education (JNNE), shared that while the Japanese government is for strengthening public education, it provides funding and promotes public private partnerships (PPP) in its aid programme for education. He also noted that Japan has an important role in the World Bank and Asian Development Bank (ADB) as board member and

president respectively of these financial institutions. Millie Lecheiter of RESULTS Educational Fund (USA) highlighted the recommendations of her organisation for increased investments in public schooling over private schooling, and for the World Bank to highlight its position favoring free basic education and to align its investments towards fee-free basic education.

Delphine Dorsi, of the Right to Education Project, exposed the increasing funding of UK's DFID in financing and promoting private schooling in such countries as Pakistan, Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, India, and Myanmar. She also shared the positive impact of civil society campaigns in opposing the UK government's policy of supporting fee-paying private schools in poor developing countries. For his part, Sylvain Aubry of the Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (GI-ESCR) emphasised provisions of international human rights law that mandate the right to free compulsory primary education for all, and by implication, requiring states to refrain from funding private schools and to facilitate registration and regulation of private schools.



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National education coalition participants from India, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, and the Philippines presented the preliminary findings of their studies on privatisation and regulation of the private sector involved in education. They shared similar stories – increasing privatisation of education that results in discrimination, inequity, and segregation, and declining public investment in education. Regulations and accountability measures covering private actors in education are generally weak in these countries, and where they exist, monitoring and enforcement are generally weak and neglected.

In conclusion, the regional participants agreed to pursue studies to come up with clear evidence and a stronger narrative on privatisation and commercialisation of education, and to develop alternatives and propose solutions to strengthen public education systems for inclusive and equitable quality education for all.

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