

## Re-imagining approaches to inclusive education

SEAMEO INNOTECH 15<sup>th</sup> International Conference  
6-8 March 2018, Quezon City, Manila, Philippines

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**ASPBAE was one of the co-organisers of the SEAMEO INNOTECH conference and invited its partners in the youth-led action research initiative from India, Indonesia, and the Philippines to participate and share their experiences, findings, and recommendations on girls' education.**

Abhivyakti Media for Development (India), in partnership with ASPBAE, has completed a pilot initiative on youth-led action research on girls' education in five villages of Nashik and Dhule districts in Maharashtra, India. Several stories of the young girls and their struggles with education were inspiring and were shared at the 15<sup>th</sup> International Conference organised by the South East Asia Ministers of Education Organisation (SEAMEO), through its centre, SEAMEO INNOTECH (SEAMEO Regional Center for Educational Innovation and Technology) in Quezon City. The focus of the conference, which was attended by approximately 200 participants working in formal or non-formal education, was on re-imagining approaches to inclusive education.

ASPBAE was one of the co-organisers of this conference and invited its partners in the youth-led action research initiative from India, Indonesia, and the Philippines to participate and share their experiences, findings, and recommendations on girls' education. Representatives from Abhivyakti (India), E-Net Philippines and SPPI (Philippines), and ASPPUK (Indonesia) participated in the conference.

In the lead up to the SEAMEO INNOTECH conference, the ASPBAE team met with community youth representatives from Manila and Capul to share their experiences in youth-led action research. They also visited the National Youth Commission of the Philippines and explored possibilities of influencing the Commission on their youth education agenda.

The three-day SEAMEO INNOTECH conference, under the broad theme of inclusive education, focused on the question - 'How do we grow a learning community that welcomes everyone?'. The conference was a mix of plenary presentations, synthesis sessions, and concurrent breakout discussions on inclusive education and its relationship to the learning themes which were - (1) Inclusive Leadership (2) Inclusive Learning Culture, and (3) Inclusive Policies and Practices. The conference used the methodology of Open Space Technology, which allowed the participants to co-create the agenda and determine ways to take it forward. A selection of compelling stories addressing the three learning themes framed the conference deliberations. Learning conversations were facilitated using a modified Open Space Technology approach that engaged participants to discuss education-related issues as well as exchange and share new ideas and best practices in the implementation of inclusive teaching and learning strategies in the region. The conference used the power of stories to explore the inclusive quality of education from the perspective of learners who are traditionally unseen, unheard, and under-served.



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Some of the proposed topics for discussion were on addressing the learning needs of the marginalised communities, quality education for all, creating a culture of inclusivity, climate change, *Shodhini* (seekers) stories of empowerment, managing learners with a difference, receptive education policies, managing negative perceptions, mindfulness and inclusive education, and tools of action research, amongst others. ASPBAE and its partners proposed two sessions, one on youth-led action research in the three countries, and the other on community tools developed in the youth-led action research.

Community youth from the action research spoke of their experiences of conducting the research and the challenges they faced. Representatives from the 3 organisations in India, Indonesia, and the Philippines shared the overall goal of the action research, reasons for its conception, and efforts in advocating it to different stakeholders in their countries.

In conclusion, the stories of the young women were engaging and made the theme of inclusive education easy to relate to and understand, enabling participants to continue working forward in this regard in their own context and socio-cultural realities.

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