

16th UNESCO-APEID International Conference
The Heart of Education: Learning to Live Together
21-23 November 2012, Bangkok, Thailand

Welcome Address

Gwang-Jo Kim, Director, UNESCO Bangkok

Khun Panita Kambhu Na Ayutthaya, Permanent Secretary of the Thai Ministry of Education

Ms. Michelle Lombard, President of the Asia Pacific Emerging Markets of Pearson

Mr. Thomas DuCharme, Head of the Treasury and Securities Services in Asia Pacific of J.P. Morgan

Distinguished speakers and participants

Friends and colleagues

Welcome to the 16th UNESCO-APEID International Conference, *The Heart of Education: Learning to Live Together*.

The UNESCO-APEID International Conference provides a forum for policy dialogue and knowledge sharing on education in and beyond the Asia-Pacific region. Since the first conference in 1995, this series of conferences have become a flagship activity of UNESCO Bangkok.

This year, we are privileged to co-organize the conference with the Ministry of Education in Thailand, the Asian-Pacific Network for International Education and Values, Pearson Thailand and J.P. Morgan. We would like to thank them for their contributions in ensuring that the conference will be a success.

Over the years, the conferences have gained a loyal following of participants. You – our speakers, paper presenters and participants – are a key factor that has helped to make the conferences a special event. You continue to support us by making your way to the conference in Hangzhou in 2009, in Jakarta last year and in Bangkok this time.

The themes of the conferences have also been instrumental in attracting your interest. We believe it is critical for us to address topical educational issues and challenges of the day. This year we have chosen *The Heart of Education: Learning to Live Together* as our theme. Your presence here testifies to the importance of this challenging, global issue.

The Asia and Pacific region is very diverse with many countries, cultures, ethnic groups, religions and languages. There are more than 4.2 billion people living in this region. This represents about 60% of the world's population. And when we add the political, economic, social and environmental dimensions to this massive pot of humanity, there are bound to be disagreements, tensions and conflicts.

In 1996, UNESCO published the Delors report, *Learning: The Treasure Within*. This report has helped to frame the thinking about education. The seven overarching tensions described in Delors report are still valid today as they were 16 years ago, that is:

1. The tension between the global and the local
2. The tension between the universal and the individual
3. The tension between tradition and modernity

4. The tension between long-term and short-term considerations
5. The tension between competition and concern for equality of opportunity
6. The tension between expansion of knowledge and our capacity to assimilate it
7. The tension between the spiritual and the material

However, our world has changed substantially since then. We will have to examine these tensions with reference to current context, bringing new insights and perspectives to the dialogue about the future of education in the 21st Century.

The Delors report presented a paradigm for education that is supported by four pillars of learning, i.e. learning to live together, learning to know, learning to do and learning to be. At the heart of this paradigm is the learning to live together pillar, which addresses the need for us to learn about other people and their history, cultures, traditions and values, so that we can foster mutual understanding, peaceful interchange and harmony. By recognizing our interdependence, as well as the risks and challenges involved, we will be able to develop more effective solutions to manage and minimize conflicts.

We acknowledge that this is not an easy task. We face many challenges and obstacles, but that should drive us to work harder to make sure that our education system is going in the right direction.

There is no question that we have to produce generations of people who are highly capable, skilled, innovative and resourceful. But we strongly believe that our fundamental responsibility – as policy makers, leaders, educators, parents and community members – is to produce people with hearts and people who care.

By and large, the education system in many countries places great emphasis on tests and examinations to measure learning outcomes and achievements. Standardized tests such as PISA and TIMSS have shown their usefulness for evaluation and benchmarking some aspects of the quality of education.

Tests and examinations have also helped to foster competition, which is highly desirable in many situations and circumstances. But the scope and scale of problems and challenges facing a complex world today require more collaborative and cooperative approaches and solutions to address issues such as HIV/AIDS, climate change, environmental disasters, cross-border disputes and so on. Education has clearly become a transnational agenda.

For education to be effective, we have to work together with governments, private sector and civil society. We need to work with big corporations, NGOs, philanthropists and ordinary people from all walks of life.

We are here to learn how we can do this more effectively.

You will be hearing from many inspiring speakers and paper presenters over the next three days. While most of them are from neighbouring countries, some of the speakers have travelled from as far as the US, Europe and Central Asia to get here.

The programme is very rich, covering a wide range of topics. Do look through it carefully and make sure you attend the sessions closest to your heart.

We have about 300 participants who represent 30 countries from all corners of the world. Some of you have met each other in previous conferences, so this will be a reunion for you.

We have many newcomers and we hope that you will become active members of this big family of passionate educators whose goal is to do as much as we can to educate generations of students to become productive, caring and conscientious global citizens.

Last but not least, we hope we can come up with one or two concrete ideas for follow up actions after the conference.

Allow me to end my speech with this Chinese proverb:

If there is light in the soul,
There will be beauty in the person.
If there is beauty in the person,
There will be harmony in the house.
If there is harmony in the house,
There will be order in the nation.
If there is order in the nation,
There will be peace in the world.

Thank you very much for your attention.

I wish you a very productive conference.