

Concept note

Regional workshop on educational data and indicators in East, South and West Asia

UNESCO Institute for Statistics

Dates: 9-12 November 2008

Location: Bangkok, Thailand

Background

The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) regularly organizes regional workshops, whereby national educational statisticians and planners congregate to review key education statistics their countries provide to the UIS; discuss issues related to such statistics and derived indicators; discuss and revise ISCED mappings; share experiences and views on data quality, collection, analysis and national and international use of education data; review and discuss new tools, methodologies and concepts of education statistics/indicators. Such workshops are an important part of the UIS strategy to continuously improve the quality of its international education database in terms of policy-relevance, scope, coverage, reliability, timeliness, comparability and other dimensions and to promote cooperation and collaboration among member states.

A regional workshop is planned to take place during 9-12 November 2008 in Bangkok, Thailand. This workshop will take place against the backdrop of impressive achievements in the completeness of data provided to the UIS since the last time such a regional workshop was held (May 2005 in Islamabad, Pakistan), existing problems in such data provision as well as emerging demands for cross-national data and indicators to measure and monitor changes in education.

The countries and territories in the region are quite diverse in terms of the timeliness of providing the data to the UIS, the completeness and the overall quality of the data provided. Judging from the indicators published in the Global Education Digest and the Education for All Global Monitoring Report, efforts are needed to improve the completeness and quality of data in order to better benchmark the achievement of these educational systems in terms of internal efficiency and completion in primary education, overall development of secondary and tertiary education as well as educational finance.

Workshop objectives and theme

The workshop aims to improve the quality of comparative statistics and indicators of education, including the timeliness, accuracy, coverage and comparability of the data. More specifically, the objectives of the workshop are to:

- 1) Review statistics recently provided to UIS by each country, discuss issues pertinent to such data and the derived indicators, and seek solutions;
- 2) Review, and revise as necessary, the national mapping of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), identify and resolve problem areas;

- 3) Review current questionnaires of the UIS Survey of Education Statistics and discuss potential changes in order to address emerging issues in education;
- 4) Provide an opportunity for countries to exchange views on data quality, collection, analysis and national and international use of education statistics;
- 5) Present and discuss the relevant UIS data procedures (e.g. the use of comparative population data provided by the United Nations Population Division), new UIS e-questionnaire environment and share information on the other new procedures that the UIS has introduced.

While the focus of the workshop is the quality of statistics and indicators on all levels of education, particular emphasis will be put on those of **higher education**. There are two main reasons for making higher education the theme of the workshop. First, as countries and territories in the region have achieved or are close to achieving the goals of universal participation in primary education, the healthy development of post-basic education, including higher education as well as secondary education, is gaining growing attention in policy discussions. Cross-national comparisons would benefit such discussions by providing insights into the overall development trajectories of higher and secondary education in different political, economic, cultural and educational contexts.

Second, the current status of the data and indicators on higher education limits the extent to which the indicators can better inform the policy discussions. For instance, data on higher educational provided to the UIS are often incomplete, particularly the data on enrolment and graduates by field. The same is true with data on education finance. When data exist, their accuracy is frequently questioned, much of which is perhaps related to the application of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), especially in higher education and the other post-basic programmes. Despite the fact that some of such programmes share similarities across most of the countries, they are classified differently in individual countries, which impact the reporting of the data and the indicators constructed. In addition, the current framework for data reporting and indicators may not be adequate to address the existing and emerging needs for policy discussions.

Making higher education the theme of the workshop should not, and does not, exclude the efforts to be made to improve the quality of statistics on other levels of education. Improving the timeliness, completeness and the accuracy of the data on the programmes preceding higher education is essential for monitoring the EFA goals, which is a policy priority around the world. There are still gaps in the completeness and accuracy of data on enrolment-by-age for many of the countries in the region. In addition, data on educational expenditure for various levels of education in most of the countries in the region either lack the necessary details for constructing useful indicators or are missing entirely, which hinders the capacity to benchmark countries on an essential aspect of school systems, investment in education. Finally, there have been discussions about the discrepancies between the population-based indicators in the comparative education database of the UIS and the nationally publications due to the different sources of population data used. It would be important to understand the procedures adopted by the UIS in order to seek solutions when such discrepancies arise.

In addition, the UIS has introduced new procedures to improve the timeliness of data release and to facilitate the submission of data by national statisticians. Such procedures include **rolling data collection, e-questionnaires, new design of the questionnaire** (e.g. the new Questionnaire on National Education Programmes instead of Tables 1 of Questionnaires A and C in the previous version). It would also be useful to provide training on the **guidelines for making national estimates** when actual data are missing.

Dates and venue

The workshop is scheduled for 9-12 November 2008 in Bangkok, Thailand.

The preparation of the workshop will be led by UIS and its staff at the Assessment, Information Systems, Monitoring and Statistics at UNESCO Bangkok (UIS-AIMS). Partnership will also be sought with other units of UNESCO Bangkok, the Cluster Offices in Apia, Beijing, New Delhi and Jakarta and National Offices in Hanoi and Katmandu .

Strategy

Within individual countries and territories, the statistics required for the Survey of Education Statistics often exist in more than one governmental agency. This means that completion of the survey forms requires the collective efforts of professionals in different ministries and/or departments. Thus it is important that the two national representatives attending the workshop complement each other regarding responsibility, knowledge and expertise necessary in view of the workshop objectives. In principle, the two national representatives should cover the various parts of the entire survey (Questionnaire on National Education Programmes, A, B and C). Given the workshop's focus on higher education, **one of the representatives should be familiar with the classification, data and issues related to higher education in the country**

A focus of the workshop will be to resolve outstanding issues regarding submitted education data and indicators to the UIS through bilaterals between national statisticians and UIS staff. This includes clarifications necessary for applying ISCED mapping to national programmes, revising national classifications and providing additional data.

Emphasis will also be given to introducing the national statisticians to the UIS work procedures, the ISCED framework, and the calculation of indicators through the demonstration of a selected number of indicators. Relevant documents will be prepared and distributed among the participants prior to the workshop (more details in the **Documents** section). During the workshop, time will be devoted to presentations and group discussions for these topics.

Efforts will also be made to foster group synergy by facilitating the sharing of experiences and lessons, discussions of common issues and collectively seeking solutions. One additional approach to foster group synergy is to facilitate the formation of task forces among national statisticians and other partners to work on thematic issues. For instance, a task force could be formed to look into the challenges and possible solutions to the provision of education finance data.

Participants

Participants will be invited from the following countries: *Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, , Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Hong Kong (China), SAR, Islamic Republic of Iran, DPR Korea, Maldives, Macau, China, Myanmar, Nepal, Lao PDR, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Singapore, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam*. The UIS will cover costs associated with the workshop, including accommodation and meals, and will make the necessary travel arrangements on behalf of representatives.

The participants will be nominated by the governments and confirmed by the UIS. Once the nominations are confirmed, formal invitations to participate will be sent by the UIS.

Documents

A number of documents will be made available to participants both prior to and during the workshop to facilitate their discussions. These documents include the following:

1. Currently available documents

- ISCED manual
- Global Education Digest 2008
- EFA Global Monitoring Report 2009

2. New documents to be prepared by the UIS before the workshop

- ISCED mapping for each country
- Data/indicators with questions highlighted
- Regional profiles (based on selected indicators) on:
 - Higher education (including mobile students);
 - Primary and secondary education

--- End ---