



# 8<sup>th</sup> ASEF Regional Conference on Higher Education (ARC8)

Outlook 2030: Inclusive and Diverse Higher Education in Asia and Europe

## ARC8 EG2 Inclusive and Flexible Lifelong Learning Pathways

Session 2 | Monday, 11 January 2021

### Summary

**Presentation by Dr Sheikh Lukman S A HAMID, Director, Lifelong Learning Centre (L3C), Ministry of Education, Brunei Darussalam**

Sheikh was asked to focus on the following questions in a 10-minute presentation to provide food for thought for the expert group:

1. What is your take, how inclusive are the national, institutional LLL policies and practices currently, what is the status quo? Do you have any numbers to show?
2. What potential risks do you foresee that could jeopardize greater inclusion in LLL in the next 10 years?
3. What opportunities, leverage points do you see to promote inclusion in LLL the next 10 years?

Sheik Lukman started by introducing his organisation, The Lifelong Learning Centre (L3C) in Brunei Darussalam. L3C was created in 2020 with the mission to build holistic individuals and inclusive society by improving the opportunities for lifelong learners of all ages and expand lifelong learning opportunities for strengthening communities by 2024. In order to meet this goal, the centre has three strategic goals (1) to develop a policy framework and guidelines to improve opportunities in lifelong learning in Brunei Darussalam (2) Review the provision of lifelong learning programmes (3) Promote public enrolment in lifelong learning programmes. L3C caters to different type of stakeholders:

- Individuals, by giving career advice, training programme advice and up-to-date job market information.
- Employers, by offering a resource centre for training development needs, offering nationally accredited courses.
- CET Providers (continuing education providers), by forging partnerships with them, regardless of whether they are public or private or even international and offering facilities for them.

Sheikh then proceeded to discuss his insights on the **status quo** of inclusion in lifelong learning.

**A report from UNESCO on Lifelong learning in Transformation stated;**

- Brunei reported on **continuing professional development (CPD)** or short-term pedagogical training, spanning the whole spectrum from formal to informal learning, in support of Priority 5 of SEAMEO's seven priority areas – Revitalizing Teacher Education
  - Under MOE's **institution of Lifelong learning for teachers**; Brunei Darussalam Teachers Academy (BDTA), Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah Institute of Education (SHBIE) and the Institute for Leadership, Innovation and Advancement (ILIA), University Brunei Darussalam (UBD)
- (Yorozu, R. 2017)

**Under Priority 4 of SEAMEO's seven priority areas - Promoting Technical and Vocational Education and Training**

- Brunei introduced the **Industrial Skills Qualifications (ISQ)** in 2013 – a program intended to train unemployed youth in one of six occupational trades within the energy sector
- One of the valuable lifelong learning practices in Brunei Darussalam is the linking of multiple sectoral agencies – Education, Industries, Government, regulators – and the community support in the provision of vocational and technical education

(Yorozu, R. 2017)

A UNESCO report on “Lifelong Learning in Transformation” stated that Brunei Darussalam is revitalizing the teacher training programmes. Teachers have experience, but need to keep up with changes in technology, new modalities of learning. The Ministry of Education has set up several centres to support lifelong learning for teachers, such as the Brunei Darussalam Teachers Academy (BDTA), Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah Institute of Education (SHBIE) and the Institute for Leadership, Innovation and Advancement (ILIA), University Brunei Darussalam (UBD). This falls in line with the Priority Agenda of the Southeast Asian Ministers Organisation's (SEAMEO) agenda and support priority 5 on Revitalization of Teacher Education.

In support of the SEAMEO agenda Brunei Darussalam also acts on priority 4, Promoting Technical and Vocational Education and Training. The industrial skills qualification was introduced a few years back, a program to train unemployed youth in one of the six occupational trades under the energy sector. The programme is also linking multiple sectoral agencies - Education, Industries, Government, regulators –and the community support in the provision of vocational and technical education.

- 1 Since November 2019, His Majesty the Sultan of Brunei announced the establishment of Manpower Employment Council (MPEC) to ensure effective manpower planning and focusing on gainful and sustainable employment towards tackling unemployment in Brunei Darussalam.
- 2 Lifelong learning Centre (L3C) was officially launched in July 2020 during the press conference made broadcasted across the country through all media and television. Since then L3C has commenced operating with the **SkillsPlus** initiative under the Learn and Grow Program by the Manpower Planning and Employment Council (MPEC).
  - It provides funding assistance to local jobseekers and local employees in the private sector including freelance workers to upskill and reskill themselves
- 3 Brunei launched its **Economic Blueprint: Towards a Dynamic and Sustainable Economy** on the 6<sup>th</sup> January 2021; Aspiration 2 : Skilled, Adaptive and Innovative People under policy direction 3 to promote and provide accessible lifelong learning to meet the changing skill needs of our economy (Ministry of Finance and Economy, Brunei Darussalam, 2020)

Since November 2019, His Majesty the Sultan of Brunei announced the establishment of Manpower Employment Council (MPEC) to ensure effective manpower planning and focusing on gainful and sustainable employment towards tackling unemployment in Brunei Darussalam. Tackling unemployment is high on the agenda of Brunei, it is important to ensure that there's a proper alignment between the supply and demand of skills and competencies as well as the job markets. This coordination is the main job of this Council.

The Lifelong learning Centre (L3C) was officially launched in July 2020. L3C is operating the Skills Plus initiative, which provides funding assistance to local jobseekers and local employees in the private sector including freelance workers to upskill and reskill themselves. They can get funding up to about 700 us dollars.

The most recent development has been the launch of the Brunei Economic Blueprint: Towards a Dynamic and Sustainable Economy. One of the goals stated in the document is to promote and provide accessible lifelong learning to meet the changing needs of the economy.

After providing this overview on status quo and recent developments in the lifelong learning scene in Brunei Darussalam, Sheikh Lukman shared his points on **potential opportunities or leverage points that could lead to greater inclusion in the next decade, especially in the context of Brunei Darussalam**. These were the followings:

- Restriction to the accessibility of MPEC funds as rigid criteria were imposed. These funds are only available for those who meet the following criteria:
  - Age group between 16-45 years with no permanent job
  - Local jobseekers
  - Locally employed only within the private sectors
- Lack of policy in specifying priority groups of learners under LLL initiatives to ensure inclusive and equitable education building on the current conditions of education.

- As a newly established centre, L3C has not yet fully implemented Research & Development (R&D) activities, however, its core importance was mandated to monitor and evaluate policies development for all LLL initiatives at a national level.
- Recognition, Validation and Accreditation (RVA) system of non-formal and informal education have not yet been implemented nationally as well as regionally.

Sheikh Lukman also shared his insights on **potential opportunities or leverage points that could lead to greater inclusion in the next decade, especially in the context of Brunei Darussalam**. These were the followings:

- Regional cooperation in promotion of inclusive and flexible lifelong learning pathways through 2 regional intergovernmental organizations namely SEAMEO and ASEAN
  - ASEAN Workplan for Education 2016-2020
    - SUB-GOAL 4: Support the development of the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector as well as lifelong learning in the region.
  - SEAMEO Education Agenda 2015–2035
    - Priority Area 4: (4.1) RVA and NFE (Non-Formal Education)
    - Priority Area 5: Revitalization on Teacher Education (Continuous Professional Development)
- Brunei 's Whole-of Nation approach to create harmonization across the state for formal, non-formal and informal education to realize the vision 2035 as a part of coordination mechanisms and resource mobilization across multi-sectoral agencies in developing people to create opportunities for quality learning in local communities.
- Part of L3 Centre functions under MOE to develop, implement, monitor and review lifelong learning (L3) policies, framework and guidelines at national level.

## References

- Yorozu, R. (2017). Lifelong Learning in Transformation: Promising Practices in Southeast Asia. UIL Publications Series on Lifelong Learning Policies and Strategies: No. 4. UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning.
- [Ministry of Finance and Economy, Brunei Darussalam](#)
- [Seameo \(2018\). Action Agenda for the SEAMEO 7 Priority Areas](#)

**The presentation was followed by group discussion. Experts provided the following comments on the risks listed by Sheikh Lukman:**

- On “lack of policy and specifying priority groups of learners under LLL initiatives to ensure inclusive and equitable education building on the current conditions of education”
  - For example, in Brunei people in the older age group, above 50 and beyond, would not be able to have access the LLL funds according to current policies.
  - In Europe common target ranges are the followings: 5-15; 15-25; 25-50, and 60+. This approach is not prevailing in most of Asia, there are mostly no policies in place to set different targets to different age groups.
- On “lack of Research and Development funds on lifelong learning”

- This risk implies another one: because of the lack of research, there is also a lack of monitoring and evaluation of policies.
- This risk is prevailing in Europe as well, there is not enough research done on LLL.
- On the “lack of recognition, Validation and Accreditation (RVA) system of non-formal and informal education”
  - In Southeast Asia RVA of non-formal and informal learning is on the agenda and has been discussed frequently for quite some time (e.g., in SEAMEO), but nothing solid has been developed yet on recognition of this type of learning. Currently it looks like this risk has a high impact and low probability of making progress in the next 10 years.

**Group members provided the following comments on the opportunities listed by Sheikh Lukman:**

- On “Regional cooperation in promotion of inclusive and flexible lifelong learning pathways”
  - One of the important things about international cooperation is the peer learning and pressure. When countries look at what is happening in other places, it puts a bit of pressure on the to improve their status. We all try to be featured in the league tables, put our countries where we would like to see them, and figure out what to improve in order to get there.
  - Why the different platforms like ASEAN and SEAMEO are so important, because they provide opportunities for dialogue and sharing best practices.
- On the “Whole-of-nation approach to lifelong learning”
  - The bottom line of this opportunity is to prevent silos, same point that Brikena shared earlier on cross-sectoral cooperation. However, in case of Brunei, the country has put a trademark on the idea and calls it whole-of nation approach.
  - Most countries try to do this, but levels of achievement are very different. The idea of a whole-of-nation approach is really positive and can have a massive impact. It might be easier to implement this approach in a new system, like Brunei, versus in systems that has been in place for some time and have been ingrained with a lot of traditions.
  - Maybe again we could split this, because in cases where it can be started from scratch the probability and impact is very high, whereas in countries with existing systems in place it is a much bigger task, needs strong political drive and commitment from different stakeholders.
  - It depends on the governance model, takes a lot of stakeholder negotiations. In countries with a more central governance, top-down approach this might go easier then in others.
- On “Policy framework and guidelines at national level”
  - Again, this is reflecting the same points in earlier presentations. Evidence-based policy reforms, and monitoring implementation is key.
  - In Brunei, funds for lifelong learning opportunities are only available to individuals in the age group 16-45. The governments are looking at “return on investment” and does not provide funding for those closer to the retirement age (which is 55 years but going to be increased to 60 years). The average life expectancy is about 76 years, so individual still have 30 years more to go from 45.

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