

# The Challenge of ECCE Inclusive Education for Society 5.0 in Southeast Asia

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## Abstract

This article will try to answer the raised questions on how do we truly include and benefit everyone equally around the world and how do SEAMEO CECCEP promote education systems drive inclusive growth and prepare us for Society 5.0 in the area of ECCE and parenting in order to meet the SEAMEO's Seven Priorities Education Agenda 2035 align with UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and call for educational reforms for well-balanced regional development.

## Introduction

A commitment of improving and sustaining the quality of early childhood care and education (ECCE) has reached global prominence can be seen in the actions of many international organizations during the past fifteen years (Cochran, 2011, p. 65). Progress for Children Beyond Averages: Learning from the MDGs (11th edition), published in June 2015 by UNICEF, presents the latest data showing that tremendous advances in the lives of the world's children have been driven by the Millennium Development Goals. It is clear, however, that development efforts in the past fifteen years have failed to reach millions of the most disadvantaged (UNICEF, 2015, p. iii). ECCE plays a significant role in children development. ECCE has a long consequence for children development. Children who attend ECCE performs better in math, literacy and social skill in the future. ECCE also plays vital and important roles in a country's development. In fact, ECCE has become a global concern as it is reflected in SDGs no 4, Quality of Education.

Roadmap of SDG Target 4.2 ECCE clearly stated that by 2030, ensure that girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education. The foundation of the roadmap is the commitment of regional leaders. The roadmap started in 2016 by doing socialization as the Phase 1. In 2020, Phase 2 will be conducted by implementing best practices all over the globe. Phase 3 will start by 2025 by

disseminating best practices all around the world. The achievement of child development is then being examined and analyzed. By 2030, Phase 4 will be conducting evaluation of the whole process with the hope that the target is well achieved.

## The Importance of ECCE

Based on a research of Nobel Prize winning Economics Professor James Heckman of the University of Chicago. Heckman (2008) demonstrated that the quality of early childhood development (ECD) heavily influences health, economic and social outcomes for individuals and the society at large. In short: investing in ECD produces enormous economic gains. According to Heckman, ECD has even a higher rate of return per dollar invested than interventions directed at older children and adults. Heckman believes that by preventing the achievement gap, improving health outcomes, boosting earnings and providing a high rate of economic return will become the benefits of investing in quality early childhood education for disadvantaged children.

## The Social Inclusion in ECCE Context Within Society 5.0

Target SDGs 4.2 is one of the examples of definition of inclusion by providing access equal to boys and girls it is expected that education address all children around the globe. Referring to the report from World Bank, inclusion means the process of improving the terms for individuals and groups to take part in society and the process of improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of people, disadvantaged on the basis of their identity, to take part in society. Within equity principle, educators do not attempt to create all children equally, but instead they would ensure that every child will receive different support that would enable them to have equal access and opportunity to ECCE

We need to discuss social equity in ECCE as education is a tool to dismantle all forms of racism, prejudice and hegemonic thought and behaviour (Robinson & Díaz, 2006; Earick, 2009; Daniel & Escayg, 2019; Hall, 2019). Furthermore, The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states the aim of educators should be to prepare 'the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among

all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin' (Save the Children 1997, Article 29. 1d, 109).

The nature of Society 5.0 which named as "Super-smart society" was bring forth followed the hunter-gatherer society (Society 1.0), agricultural society (Society 2.0), industrialized society (Society 3.0), and information society (Society 4.0). It is a human-centered society that balances economic advancement with the resolution of social problems by a system that highly integrates cyberspace and physical space. It envisions a sustainable, inclusive socio-economic system, powered by digital technologies such as big data analytics, AI (Artificial Intelligence), the Internet of Things and Robotics. It is Japanese government in 2016 which proposed "Society 5.0" in the 5th Science and Technology Basic Plan in 2016 (a five-year national strategy formulated by the Council for Science, Technology and Innovation).

Society 5.0 achieves a high degree of convergence between cyberspace (virtual space) and physical space (real space). In the past information society (Society 4.0), people would access a cloud service (databases) in cyberspace via the Internet and search for, retrieve, and analyze information or data. In Society 5.0, a huge amount of information from sensors in physical space is accumulated in cyberspace. In cyberspace, big data are analyzed by artificial intelligence (AI), and the analysis results are fed back to humans in physical space in various forms.

In the past information society, the common practice was to collect information via the network and have it analyzed by humans. In Society 5.0, however, people, things, and systems are all connected in cyberspace and optimal results obtained by AI exceeding the capabilities of humans are fed back to physical space. This process brings new value to industry and society in ways not previously possible.

In the information society (Society 4.0), cross-sectional sharing of knowledge and information was not enough, and cooperation was difficult. Also, due to various restrictions on issues such as a decreasing birthrate and aging population and local depopulation, it was difficult to respond adequately. Platform businesses, such as Windows, Amazon, Facebook, Apple, even the huge receipt site like Cookpad. The platform is provided where information, products and other services are made available, and due to its network effect, it can provide services and functions far beyond that only one company could provide. Not to mention, the vast growing of

Internet of Things (IoT) which means connecting things other than computers and mobile phones to internet. For the reason that there is a limitation to what people can do, the task of finding the necessary information from overflowing information and analyzing it was a burden, and the labor and scope of action were restricted due to age and varying degrees of ability. In society up to now, a priority has generally been placed on social, economic, and organizational systems with the result that gaps have arisen in products and services that individuals receive based on individual abilities and other reasons.

In contrast, Society 5.0 achieves advanced convergence between cyberspace and physical space, enabling AI-based on big data and robots to perform or support as an agent the work and adjustments that humans have done up to now. This frees humans from everyday cumbersome work and tasks that they are not particularly good at, and through the creation of new value, it enables the provision of only those products and services that are needed to the people that need them at the time they are needed, thereby optimizing the entire social and organizational system.

### The Challenge of ECCE Inclusive Education for Society 5.0 in Southeast Asia

Some concern emerged within the idea of Society 5.0, i.e. the ways we live and work, and the meanings of work be changed drastically. The environment surrounding young children will also change a great deal. Furthermore, it is important to create a human-centered society. Young children will be exposed more to virtual experiences with an increased reality. Moreover, it is important to create a human-centered society, where every single member will lead a happy and affluent life.

Another challenge is perceptibly will be in the forms of learning will be transformed in the new society. This will in line with the challenges of ECCE teachers in Southeast Asia at the present time, namely, first high disparity of ECE services between urban and rural areas. Second, most villages in many countries do not have ECE Centre, especially those located in underprivileged, outer-front and outer-most areas. Third, the urgently need of quality ECE teachers. Last but not least, the insufficient policy and learning frameworks.

## Key Functions of SEAMEO CECCEP to Deal with Inclusive Education

SEAMEO CECCEP as an organisation within Southeast Asian countries that has mandate to be a centre of excellence in a research, capacity building and advocacy and partnerships in ECCE and parenting also tries to cope with problems of inclusive education especially in ECCE.

SEAMEO CECCEP take the part of becoming a research-hub that collects and analyses data, and disseminates information and expertise related to ECCE and parenting within the SEAMEO member countries by, first, expanding access to a quality ECCE by implements the result report of regional documentation of Innovative Financing Mechanisms and Partnerships on ECCE. Second, providing quality ECCE means better teacher performances. UNESCO Bangkok and SEAMEO has a guide on ECCE Teacher's Competency Framework (TCF). Making sure that TCF has implemented in Southeast Asia has tackle one issue that is improving quality ECCE teachers. And third, equipping teachers with understanding, knowledge and practices of inclusive education by giving training, courses on inclusive education in partnerships with other SEAMEO center or other organizations.

## Suggestion Concerning with Inclusive Education Related to SDGs 4.2

In an endeavor of improving access and quality of girls' education through community-based early childhood education and early-year gender mainstreaming, by means of:

1. Supporting girls to transition from early childhood education to lower primary education.
2. Supporting the creation of a gender-responsive and safe teaching-learning environment, free of school-related gender-biased violence.
3. Engaging female and male teachers to develop gender responsive teaching attitudes and practices and be change agents.
4. Increasing parents, teachers and governments' (national and local) understanding and commitment in realizing gender equality and equity as well as implementing gender mainstreaming education at early years.

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