



## SEAMEO CONGRESS 2021 (Virtual)

Theme: Transforming Southeast Asian Education, Science and Culture  
in the Digital Age

28-29 April 2021, Bangkok, Thailand

### CONCEPT NOTE

#### *SEAMEO Congress 2021 Overview*

##### A. Background

SEAMEO conducted the 1<sup>st</sup> SEAMEO Education Congress from 26 to 29 March 2001 with the theme **Challenge in the New Millennium**. The Congress was attended by about 400 participants representing teachers/educators, school administrators from all levels of education and representatives of Ministries of Education from SEAMEO Member and Associate Member Countries.

From 27 to 29 May 2004, SEAMEO, in partnership with UNESCO, held the 2<sup>nd</sup> SEAMEO Education Congress and Expo with the theme **Adapting to Changing Times and Needs**. The activity brought 997 participants from 40 countries from all over the world. The participants included education decision-makers at all levels, academics, researchers and practitioners in education, development agency staff and non-government organisation specialists and students.

In 2014, SEAMEO, in collaboration with the British Council and the Institute for the Promotion of Teaching Science Education (IPST) re-launched the SEAMEO Congress with the theme **Southeast Asia in Transition: Re-Thinking Education, Science and Culture for Regional Integration**. The 3<sup>rd</sup> SEAMEO Congress was held from 21 to 22 October 2014 in Bangkok, Thailand and was attended by 472 stakeholders.

In early 2020, major education disruptions forced more than 1.52 billion learners worldwide and more than 60.2 million teachers are no longer in the classroom due to the pandemic: COVID-19. In Southeast Asia alone, about 247 million learners are hunkering down and attending online/flexible learning options in varying degrees from their own homes, in compliance with strict social distancing protocols and instructions from governments to stay-at-home, all in the abundance of caution and flatten the curve and control the rise of COVID-19 cases. Such an unprecedented case has vastly affected education in the region and it is certain that there is a new normal that will emerge out of this COVID-19 experience and the old way of learning is now untenable.

The education disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic have ushered in the golden age of distance learning and flexible learning options forced by unprecedented school closures and lockdowns among all Member Countries. Exchanging the perspectives on the global and current issues affecting Southeast Asian Countries is the best platform to learn and build regional consensus on how education, science, and culture transformation can effectively

contribute towards the promotion of human development in the community, country, and at the regional level.

In this decade, there is an increasing number of people who are actively using various forms of technology as information and communication technology (ICT) is no longer an optional addition but an integral part of our lives. Its importance has been magnified due to the school disruptions caused by COVID-19. In this rapidly evolving workforce, ICT is the essential skill required as a fundamental skill for all students to confidently survive and thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and all the uncertainties and challenges that it may bring. Therefore, the Southeast Asian Education for the new decade 2030 should involve and consider the new normal - a new paradigm of educational system management for preparing the students with appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes regardless of the challenges brought by education disruptions.

The students in the Alpha Generation need to learn wherever, whenever and to leverage and enjoy the countless benefits of using ICT while also becoming resilient in the face of potential risks to be able to outweigh the risks ultimately. Growing on the drawbacks and risks of using ICT, some of the challenges should be concerned including health, mental hazards either due to the lockdown/quarantine rules due to COVID-19, breaches in data security and safety, misuse of information, or more socially critical issues such as digital inequality, online propaganda, and radicalisation.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution, also known as Industry 4.0, a new era that builds and extends the impact of digitisation in new and unanticipated ways ushered disruptive technology. Everywhere we see innovative technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and robotics, virtual reality (VR), Internet of Things (IoT), autonomous vehicles, 3-D printing, nanotechnology, biotechnology, materials science, energy storage, and quantum computing. These technologies are developing intensely and affecting all aspects including education.

The Fourth Strategic Dialogue for Education Ministers (SDEM) 2019 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia seriously took into consideration the fast-changing technological advances brought by Industry 4.0 and the digital era coined by Artificial Intelligence (AI) which are affecting education within and across countries in the region and creating a digital divide. The meeting also called for transformation and acceleration of innovation that can be addressed through the power of collaborative work among the SEAMEO family in responding to those disruptive technological advances. The education disruptions due to COVID-19 have also placed a premium in ensuring that no learner is left behind and options are available, whether it is high tech, low tech, or no tech, depending on the infrastructure setup and availability which varies from country to country.

The international community adopted the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015, including one for education (SDG 4 -- Education 2030), calling for a more equitable, inclusive, and quality lifelong learning for all. Similarly, the Ministers of Education of Southeast Asia launched the SEAMEO New Education Agenda based on seven priority areas for the next two decades (2015-2035). The new agendas align with the UN SDG 4 covering of Early Childhood Care and Education, Addressing Barriers to Inclusion, Resiliency in the Face of Emergencies, Promoting Technical and Vocation Education and Training (TVET), Revitalising Teacher Education, Promoting Harmonisation in Higher Education and Research, and Adopting a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Curriculum. With the view of achieving sustainability of the region, there should be a more effective and thorough interconnected operation between SEAMEO Member Countries, Associate Member Countries, Affiliate Members, and education partners to pursue regional goals. It is time to check the progress and accomplishment of SEAMEO on delivering the mandates and to prepare for the next decade to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, it is timely for the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) in collaboration with the Ministry of Education of Thailand to convene the **SEAMEO Congress 2021** for Education, Science, and Culture in Southeast Asia virtually. The SEAMEO Congress 2021 will serve as a platform for the policymakers, teachers, researchers, and educators to exchange effective policy, fruitful teaching experience, and share new learning paradigms and practices in the digital age. Bringing along together the regional commitments to ensure equity and opportunities for all, and by considering the fast-changing development in technology in this disruptive era, the chosen theme for the SEAMEO Congress 2021 is **Transforming Southeast Asian Education, Science and Culture in the Digital Age**.

SEAMEO Congress 2021 aims at providing a wisdom platform for education actors, both national and international level, to reflect how the shared expertise regional can help enhance new policy-making, support innovative teaching and learning paradigms that would reproduce best student's self-understanding, levitate competitiveness and strengthen our regional social values. It also provides an opportunity for education actors to craft new learning paradigms in which academic, social, and cultural virtues, as well as values, will shape not only the personal character but also the moral fibre of a knowledge-based society to form a balanced and resilient learning society that the regional citizens can cope with global demands and challenges.

## **B. Goals and Objectives**

The SEAMEO Congress 2021 has three primary aims:

- 1) to provide a platform for conversations on innovations, breakthroughs and best practices in Education, Science and Culture to achieve SDG4 2030;
- 2) to examine sustainable development platforms, networking and strategic collaboration among education actors and stakeholders in Southeast Asia and beyond for enhancing the quality of learning and ensuring wider access and relevance of education in the region; and
- 3) to build a consensus reflecting and concretising transformative educational programmes and action plans towards the development of a dynamic synergy of strengths, strategies and standards leading to the application of more inclusive and innovative learning paradigms and education policies to meet global standards.

## **C. Expected Output**

At the end of the congress, it is expected that a regional plan of action for transformative education pillars will be defined through extensive conversations and discussions among partners, co-organizers, resource persons, experts and participants.

SEAMEO Congress 2021 will support a common understanding of how Member Countries can cope with the fast-changing environment within the region, crafting common pathways to achieve and improve the quality of learning for the **alpha generation** that responds to the global needs and wider access to education, with no one left behind as envisioned under UN Sustainable Development Goals.

It is also expected that the regional plan of action from the Congress will contribute to the new decade of SEAMEO Strategic Plan (2021-2030) for the advancement of inclusive and equitable education and preparing for the future highly skilled workforce and lifelong learners for all by harnessing technology to improve learning outcomes that will adequately prepare the teachers and learners to thrive in the future of Digital Era and Artificial Intelligence (AI).

#### **D. Target Participants**

We are expecting more than 2,000 participants from Southeast Asian Countries and beyond including policy makers, educational leaders, teachers, researchers, educators from the eleven (11) SEAMEO Member Countries, administrators and educators from government organisations, public and private educational institutions, agencies and departments as well as moderators and invited speakers outside Southeast Asian Countries are expected to virtually join the **SEAMEO Congress 2021**.

#### **E: Theme, Sub-Themes and Tracks**

The theme for the SEAMEO Congress 2021 is “**Transforming Southeast Asian Education, Science and Culture in the Digital Age.**”

There will be sub-themes for plenary sessions and the paper presentations and discussions in parallel session:

##### **1) Reimagining People Transformation Toward SDGs (Plenary Session 1)**

###### *Objective:*

The session aims to provide participants with inspiring presentations on how human resources could be transformed into social development to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The speakers will highlight the process of their thought and successful experience, including their inspiration.

##### **2) Building Back Better: Actions for Digital Transformation in AI Era (Plenary Session 2)**

###### *Objective:*

The session aims to provide participants with the current trends of disruptive technologies that affect education, science, and culture development in the era of the digital age, and to prepare the learners for being a capable and competent workforce. The speakers will share and provide their first-hand experiences on how to explore and to adapt technologies for their successful endeavors in business and education development.

##### **3) Transforming Education in the Post-COVID-19 Era (Plenary Session 3)**

###### *Objective:*

This session will address challenges to education due to the rapid change of digital technology as well as the COVID-19 pandemic that affected all aspects of human life including those of the **alpha** generation learners. The speakers will share and provide their thoughts and first-hand experiences on how to reshape education in the post-COVID-19 era to address the new competencies needed for the **alpha generation** learners live in the fast-changing and uncertain world in the next decade.

4) **Sufficiency Economy Philosophy and the New Normal: Balancing Reforms for Achieving the SDGs** (*Plenary Session 4*)

*Objective:*

This plenary session will address the urgent need to increase the level of participation and citizen engagement in the delivery of learning as well as in developing a more resilient educational system. A Balance reform in the New Normal is needed to strengthen the impact of public-private partnerships and for having closer collaboration among education actors and stakeholders in creating long-term and sustainable investments in science, culture, and education development in Southeast Asia. Various sustainability issues such as climate change, sustainable HEI and TVET institutions, as well as preserving heritage and culture will be discussed.

5) **Southeast Asian Education and Future's Agenda** (Plenary Session 5)

*Objective:*

The session will focus on the future of education in Southeast Asia, specifically from 2021-2030 as laid out in the SEAMEO Strategic Plan. Given the evolving education landscape in the member countries, sessions will focus on how the region can achieve all its regional and global education commitments.

6) **Transforming Education System and for Quality and Excellence** (*Parallel Session 1*)

*Objective:*

The session will provide a forum to review policies and matters and share best practices on solving the knowledge and skills gap in Southeast Asian countries and share strategies on how to tackle learning poverty and to bridge the output of skills development with the manpower requirements of the new global market.

7) **Building a Future for the Alpha Generation** (*Parallel Session 2*)

*Objective:*

Inequity and gender bias are still existing even in this digital age. This session serves as a platform to share and promote alternative delivery of education through diversified learning modes of using information and communication technology (ICT), online learning, and electronic learning and introduce learners to the technology of digital classrooms to tackle gender and equity issues in the region.

8) **Post-COVID-19 Pandemic Reform and Innovation** (*Parallel Session 3*)

*Objective:*

The COVID-19 Pandemic has brought with it unprecedented challenges and opportunities that dramatically changed the education landscape in Southeast Asia. This session will feature innovations that were introduced, magnified, and amplified to ensure that no learner is left behind and learning continues despite the challenges.

9) **STEM Education Design for Improving the Quality of the Workforce**  
(Parallel Session 4)

*Objective:*

Alpha generations need to equip themselves with high skill competencies to become high-quality workforces and responsible global citizens. This can be achieved through quality Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Education through the design thinking process. Accordingly, the session will address the issues on policy design for the STEM workforce and share the best practices on STEM Teaching Strategies as well as on innovation to strengthen STEM Education.

10) **Congress Synthesis and Recommendations** (Plenary Session 6)

*Objective:*

This session will address any challenges to improve the quality of education due to the rapid change of digital technology under the theme "Transforming Southeast Asian Education, Science, and Culture in Digital Age" that affected all aspects of human life including those of the **alpha** generation learners. Joint Statement of concrete action plans with the tangible recommendations will be synthesized, consolidated, and presented.

**G. Venue**

**SEAMEO Congress 2021 is Free of Charge** and will be convened fully virtual through the existing online platform such as FLOOR by 10times.com.

**H. Contact Information**

**Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Secretariat**

(SEAMEO Secretariat)

Mom Luang Pin Malakul Centenary Building  
920 Sukhumvit Road, Bangkok 10110, THAILAND

Tel: +66 (0) 2391-0144 | Fax: (0) 2381-2587

E-mail: congress2021@seameo.org

<http://congress2021.seameo.org>

Dr Orawan Sriboonruang  
Programme Officer for Research  
and Evaluation  
Email: orawan@seameo.org

Ms Pimratchada Patanasuthikul  
Executive Secretary  
Email: pimratchada@seameo.org