

Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization  
(SEAMEO) Secretariat

**Mission Report**

by Abigail Cuales Lanceta, PO III

**Small Schools Workshop**  
**Pedagogical Strategies for Improving the Performance of Small Schools**  
29-31 March 2010  
Parkcity Everly Hotel, Miri, Sarawak, Malaysia

**Introduction**

The idea of working together on small schools among the SEAMEO Member Countries was an offshoot of the leadership of the 43<sup>rd</sup> SEAMEO Council President, H E Dato Seri Hishammuddin Tun Hussein in 2008.

The Ministry of Education, Malaysia developed the proposal to hold a regional discussion on small schools and obtained funds from the World Bank.

With MOE Malaysia and the World Bank co-leading, the workshop dubbed as “Pedagogical Strategies for Improving the Performance of Small Schools” was held on 29-31 March 2010 at the Parkcity Everly Hotel, Miri, Sarawak, Malaysia.

Five SEAMEO Member Countries participated, namely: Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand. A representative of the SEAMEO Secretariat participated as well. Representatives from the World Bank offices such as Washington DC, Cambodia, and the Philippines attended the workshop. A former vice minister of Ministry of Education of Colombia and founder of the Escuela Nueva (New School) was invited by World Bank to serve as resource person. Workshop participants totaled to 52.

**Objectives of the workshop**

1. To critically review the status of small schools in SEAMEO Member Countries
2. To share best practices and effective teaching and learning tools among the participants of Member Countries in areas such as management of small schools, teaching and learning in multigrade classrooms and resource allocation
3. To develop strategic action plans to overcome or minimize issues of small schools
4. To provide opportunities to establish partnerships with members from participating countries to facilitate activities beneficial to small schools

**Workshop components**

1. Presentations of country reports by the five SEAMEO Member Countries
2. Sharing of best practices

- Ba' Kelalan Primary School: A Malaysian Experience by Mr Pudun Tadam, Head Teacher, Sarawak, Malaysia
  - The Special Challenges of Small Schools by Mr Eduardo Velez Bustillo, Education Sector Manager, The World Bank
  - Education Service Delivery Through Multigrade Teaching by Ms Vicky Colbert de Arboleda, Executive Director, Escuela Nueva Foundation, Colombia
3. Discussions and reflections
  4. School visits

## Summary

1. Country presentations included basic country profile, basic education performance, policy thrusts and directions, status of small schools, major issues and challenges, strategies and programmes, and some success stories.
2. SEAMEO Member Countries have various definitions of small schools.
  - Cambodia – a school that does not offer complete elementary grade levels
  - Indonesia – schools in underdeveloped villages
  - Malaysia – a school with less than 150 pupils
  - Philippines – multigrade school
  - Thailand – tends to define a small school based on performance, e.g. low performing schools are the small schools; mentioned correlation with multigrade school as well

Cambodia proposed for a common definition of “small school” but the workshop did not cover a discussion on this.

3. Common major challenges on the implementation of small schools included:
  - Issues on teachers’ competencies and the need for improved in-service training programme
  - The need to strengthen school-based management and accountability
  - The limited school facilities in isolated and geographically inaccessible areas.
4. Providing quality education and not merely addressing the issue of access in education is the key to truly provide Education For All. This was highlighted by almost all SEAMEO Member Countries present at the workshop.
5. Objective 3 of the workshop was not achieved. There was no dedicated discussion to develop strategic plans related to small schools on national and regional levels.

## Notes and attachments

1. List of Participants (attached)
2. Opening Remarks of the SEAMEO Secretariat (attached)
3. Presentation slides will be stored on a common online folder.
4. Article on the activity will be published on the SEAMEO website.

**List of International Participants**  
**Small School Workshop: Pedagogical Strategies**  
**For Improving the Performance of Small Schools**  
 March 29-31, 2010  
 ParkCity Everly Hotel, Miri  
 Sarawak, Malaysia

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### List of Participants (Malaysia)

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<p>Teacher Education Institute</p>	<p>Mr. V. Rajasegara S/O M. Vellu Lecturer Teacher Education Institute Of Rajang Email:</p> <p>Mr. Juhilin Losuyun Takun Lecturer Teacher Education Institute Of Keningau Email:</p> <p>Mr. Amir Ismail Lecturer Teacher Education Institute Of Sarawak Email:</p>
	<p>Dr. Norizan Ahmad Lecturer Teacher Education Institute Technical Education Campus Email:</p>

School Management Division	Dr. Roziah Abdullah Head Of Unit Email:
Aminuddin Baki Institute	Dr. Mohamad Yusof Mohd Nor Lecturer Email:
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**Pedagogical Strategies for Improving the Performance of Small Schools**  
29 - 31 March 2010  
Miri, Sarawak, Malaysia

**Opening Remarks**  
by Dato' Dr Ahamad bin Sipon  
Director, SEAMEO Secretariat

Greetings to the organizers and participants of the Workshop on Pedagogical Strategies for Improving the Performance of Small Schools that is being held from 29 to 31 of March 2010 in Miri, Sarawak, Malaysia.

Foremost, let me convey my appreciation and congratulations to the Ministry of Education, Malaysia for taking the lead in the organization of this important activity. Let me also express my gratitude to the World Bank for co-hosting and supporting this regional discussion.

In 2008, the idea of a regional collaboration to address the needs of the small schools in the region was brought to fore by the 43rd President of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO), and the then Minister of Education of Malaysia, H E Dato' Seri Hishammuddin Tun Hussein.

Initially considered as a concern in Malaysia, the initiative to address the challenges of the small schools was later on regarded a shared vision of most SEAMEO Member Countries. With this in mind, the need for a regional discussion to share best practices and challenges was deemed to be a significant step to deal with the challenges at the regional level.

The result of the exchange of ideas will guide the Member Countries in planning the next course of action to ensure better performance and condition of the small schools in the respective SEAMEO Member Countries. By doing so, we guarantee greater access to quality education.

*Ladies and gentlemen*

SEAMEO operates in the spirit of cooperation in education, science and culture in the Southeast Asian region. One of our valuable strategies is taking advantage of the strengths and good practices of each country and partner organizations. Through this process of sharing, we aspire for the eleven SEAMEO Countries to grow and achieve the Education for All (EFA) Goals together by 2015, and even beyond.

Using similar approach to regional cooperation, I am pleased to inform the participants of this workshop that SEAMEO is implementing 10 collaborative projects to reach the unreached population groups in Southeast Asia.

Generally referred to as the “unreached”, I refer to the last percentages of the population who have either been historically and culturally excluded, or have been

pushed to difficult circumstances due to recent economic and political trends. These learners are in the lowest range in the indicators of education participation and performance, and they lack or have no access to quality educational opportunities and services.

Some of these learners might even be in our small schools.

*Ladies and gentlemen*

As you start with the three-day workshop on the Small Schools today, I would like to reiterate the support of the SEAMEO Secretariat to this worthy initiative. Please let us know in what ways we could be of assistance, particularly in the follow up activities after the workshop.

In addition, please know that our 18 SEAMEO Regional Centres and specialist institutions in the region can assist in training and research in various fields of education, science and culture. I am happy to know that one of our regional centres, SEAMEO INNOTECH, is taking part in this workshop.

In closing, I would like to affirm the need for cooperation between and among the stakeholders including the SEAMEO Member Countries, SEAMEO regional centres, partner organizations, donor agencies, and other institutions. Let us work together and improve the performance and condition of the small schools.

As I have said earlier, this is another step that will lead us towards achieving the Education For All Goals in Southeast Asia.

Thank you very much and I wish everyone a fruitful discussion and an enjoyable stay in Miri.