Keynote Speech

Promotion of International Understanding Education in the Globalizing World

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Distinguished participants,
Ladies and gentlemen.

1. Tasks for ACEIU

It is my pleasure and privilege to deliver a keynote speech at this international symposium of great significance. We are all gathered here to commemorate the launching of the Asia-Pacific Center of Education for International Understanding (ACEIU). We are all attending this symposium to present and share our vision and wisdom with one another for setting the future directions of ACEIU, deeply reflecting the constitutional mandate of UNESCO for ‘constructing the defense of peace in the minds of men’ and the dreams and realities of the Asia-Pacific region and the world at large.

Prior to my presentation on the main theme, I would like to first convey my heartfelt thanks to all of you for extending your invaluable assistance and cooperation to establish the Regional Center. Many people have been actively involved in the founding work of ACEIU since the head of the Korean delegation proposed the establishment of the Regional Center to the 29th General Assembly Meeting of UNESCO in October 1997.
On behalf of the Korean National Commission for UNESCO (KNCU) and all other National Commissions in this region, our sincere appreciation should be conveyed to Dr. Colin Power, former Deputy Director-General for Education, to Dr. Kaisa Savolainen, Director of Department of Education for a Culture of Peace of UNESCO, and to Dr. Zhou Nanzhao, Senior Programme Specialist of PROAP, for their strong endorsement of the proposed Regional Center from the outset and their continuous propagation and facilitation of the proposed idea through UNESCO and its member states for the adoption of the resolution at 30th General Assembly.

I should also thank Prof. Toh Swee-Hin, University of Alberta, Canada, and Prof. Gagdish Gundara, University of London, UK, for their devoted efforts for conducting the feasibility study with a keen insight into the missions and roles of the Regional Center.

Without the unanimous support of all the Asia-Pacific Member States of UNESCO and scholarly groups, especially APNIEVE (Asia-Pacific Network for International Education and Value Education), it would not have been possible to succeed in the adoption of our joint draft resolution submitted to the 30th General Assembly. Thus, I would also like to extend cordial thanks to the governments, National Commissions, and scholars concerned in this region.

Lastly, I think all of us should express our gratitude and respect to Dr. Kwon Tai-joon, Secretary-General of KNCU for successfully playing his role as the prime mover in this institution-building. During the past few years, he has devoted all his time and energy fully to giving birth to the new institute.

It is no doubt that the Asia-Pacific Center of Education for International Understanding is not a Korean institute, but a regional institute of and for all the UNESCO Member States in the Asia-Pacific region, although the Korean government in close collaboration with KNCU took an initiative to establish the Regional Center in Korea, and was commissioned the operational responsibility for the Center through the Agreement between UNESCO and the Government of Republic of Korea on the Establishment of ACEIU. Thus, I would propose an exchange of congratulations to one another for the opening of our Regional Center.
Ladies and gentlemen.

We are now faced with the important but formidable tasks that demand our strong leadership, both intellectual and moral, to promote and strengthen Education for International Understanding (EIU) in this region and, thus, to set a model to other parts of the world.

First of all, the most important task facing us is to clearly envision the missions and goals of ACEIU. It calls upon us to have broad and farsighted visions on the increasingly interdependent globalizing world, a deep sense of compassion with human suffering from war, violence, injustice and ecological destruction in the world, and, more importantly, a firm sense of commitment to the realization of universal values and ideals of humanity without negligence of our own cultural traditions, faiths and identities in the Asia-Pacific region.

Then, the next task is to design the programmes and activities that the Center will carry out to accomplish its missions and goals. In order to maximize the effectiveness of programmes of the Center, it should widely cultivate the functional linkages with UNESCO and its organs, the governments and National Commissions of Member States, schools and universities, NGOs and academic circles in this region and the world. The Center should also search for target groups that will have multiplying effects on EIU in this region.

These tasks call upon all the Member States in this region to actively participate and cooperate in the operation of ACEIU. The Center should fully utilize the intellectual expertises and practical experiences which they have developed and accumulated through promoting EIU in their counties. The goals and programmes of the Center should reflect the long - esteemed values and ideals, and the urgent social needs and problems of this region. Then, we will be able to design EIU to be really relevant in the Asia-Pacific context. We all well recognize that it is not such an easy task. It is more so because the Asia-Pacific region is characterized by the great diversity of its cultures and the vastness of its territories and populations.
2. New Challenges of the Globalization

Ladies and gentlemen.

We, present here today, understand well how Education for International Understanding started in the early days of UNESCO and how it has evolved along its history. It is thus not necessary to make a long review on the whole evolution process of EIU. I simply intend here to present a synoptic view on EIU and to highlight the changing visions and concepts of EIU in the era of globalization.

In light of the great shock of the massive destruction caused by World War II, world leaders at UNESCO envisioned and advocated EIU for building lasting world peace through education. The principal aims of EIU at the outset therefore was to develop in the minds of men, particularly young ones, genuine international and intercultural understanding and friendly images towards other nations, peoples and cultures. With this idealistic spirit, UNESCO has encouraged its Member States to promote EIU through the Associated Schools Project (ASP) in their respective school systems. I understand that many countries in this region have actively participated in EIU through ASP, each having its own colors and shades of the educational programme.

During the past half century, the changing realities of international relations between the rich North and the poor South, and ideological and political conflicts between the socialist East and the liberal, democratic West have made demands for new visions and approaches to EIU. The threatening social and human problems incessantly arising on the globe have created needs for the new forms of EIU designed to directly cope with each of those global problems. Moreover, the rising expectations and sharpening awareness of peoples around the world, particularly belonging to underdeveloped, underprivileged and alienated groups, have continuously demanded to reshape the goals and programmes of EIU to be fit for improving their destiny.

Consequently, EIU has now contained diverse and multi-dimensional views and concepts concerning the objectives, contents and approaches of education. A comprehensive view on EIU is well represented in the landmark guidelines for EIU set by
the 1974 UNESCO recommendation and the subsequent standard - setting instruments, declarations and action plans issued by UN and UNESCO. International education has been carried out under such various titles as international/intercultural education, human rights education, peace education, education for non-violence, studies of global problems, environmental education, education for tolerance, education for disarmament, development education, etc., with their own emphasis on the international dimension of education. Sometimes those programmes were conducted outside the conceptual umbrella of EIU.

In recent years since 1995, UNESCO has promoted “education for a Culture of Peace”, as the most comprehensive form of EIU. It seems that a recent movement for a Culture of Peace has returned to the original spirit of the UNESCO constitution, although it covers a wider spectrum of the objectives and approaches of education to include broad concerns of “civil peace among communities and social groups within states” and international peace, as well as the socio-cultural aspects, military and political aspects of world problems, and social movements through NGOs, along with education through school systems.

Whatever the title, the principal goal of EIU is to educate people to be enabled and empowered to contribute to the solution of social problems arising at the local, national and, especially international levels. EIU has been envisioned to play a crucial role in the prevention and solution of war and violence, human rights violation and social injustice, ethnocentrism and xenophobia, racism and fascism, poverty and hunger, and all other social forms and causes of human suffering. Therefore, EIU is basically education for problem - solution, conflict-resolution and societal development. It is based upon the fundamental assumption that education is not an end itself, but a means to an end, namely, the eradication of social conditions causing human suffering and ultimately the maintenance of peace, justice, democratic ideals and sustainable development in the world.

As claimed in the traditional and humanistic notion of education, however, education has the inherent intrinsic value for the self-realization of individuals through the full
development of their potentialities. In this regard, I would like to point out that the globalizing world has stressed the importance of EIU for human self-realization.

We are rapidly moving into the era of globalization that creates new social, cultural, economic, and political milieu for human living. Technological advancements have intensified and expanded more than ever the inter-dependence and inter-relatedness among peoples, communities, and nations beyond their boundaries to a global scope. Globalization was initially a striking fact and trend in economies and communication. Now its profound effects are spread all over the socio-cultural and political spheres and are even infused deeply into human consciousness. An increasing number of children live and grow under the diverse socio-cultural influences in the increasingly plural society.

The globalizing society demands even more enhanced international understanding and awareness of global interdependence not only for the maintenance of peace and justice in the world, but also for the self-realization of individuals. Education must place its emphasis on learning to live in harmony with others and on developing an integral collective self, to be fit for the globalizing society. It is then imperative to transform the whole personality, innermost value orientations and ways of living and thinking of people.

It is an important goal of education to develop a sense of self-identity of an individual as a world citizen. The narrow local and national perspectives of an individual should be expanded to global perspectives simply to be a sound person in a global village. Therefore, 'learning to live together' should be regarded as a process of being a man, not simply as a peace-building process.

3. Some Impediments to EIU

It is common in all human endeavours that there is a gap between the initial goal and the actual achievement. Although a half century has passed since the founding fathers of UNESCO set a high ideal for building a peaceful and just world through education, we have found that their visions and goals are yet to be accomplished. Unfortunately, we still frequently witness cruel acts of wars and violence, and violations of human rights
and democratic principles in many parts of the world. We tend to feel that education is powerless to play a positive role in peace-building and democratization of the society. In order to strengthen the power of EIU for the planned social change, it is in a keen need of scrutinizing the theories and practices of EIU.

First, one of the most serious impediments to EIU is the theoretical assumption upon which EIU is based. If a social reform programme or movement is to be really effective, it must contain the two indispensable dimensions and approaches; one, to change the structure of social systems and the other, to change the consciousness and behavior of the members of society, both to be geared for the desirable state of society. Even if EIU is effectively carried out to develop personal capacities and attributes, for instance, a peace-loving mind and a sense of egalitarianism, it hardly guarantees to maintain peace and equality in the society unless the social structure and international dynamics of the countries work in that way.

We often found similar theoretical limitations of psychological reductionism in the various educational programmes proposed by UN and UNESCO to solve global problems in the past. In order to achieve the ultimate goals of EIU more effectively, therefore, it is demanded to implement the programme for the structural reform in accordance with the educational programme. It also implies that EIU must expand its target groups to include, in addition to schoolteachers, and students, NGOs’ leaders, politicians and government officials who are more influential on the structural and legal reforms of the society.

Secondly, another impediment to EIU is the inward-directed reactions of many nations to globalization. The high wave of globalization has washed away the boundaries of national economies, significantly weakened the sovereignty of nation-states, and has forced widely open the doors for cultural interchange among nations. The nations and peoples in the world have responded differently to increasing openness in the newly emerging borderless world. They reacted in many different ways, for example, to multinational corporations, the neo-liberalist economic policies of the advanced countries, IMF, WTO, green round, global telecommunications via satellites and internet, the international alliance of NGOs, etc.
One form of the inward-directed reaction to the globalization is heightened nationalistic and chauvinistic sentiment. Another form is an intensified sense of competition with other nations to defend their national interests. I think that the self-defensive reactions, especially of political leaders, to globalization would seriously inhibit policy-making for the promotion of EIU. Therefore it is imperative to enhance the awareness of policy-makers as well as the general public of the increasing need for international cooperation and solidarity, and 'cooperative globalism' for peaceful coexistence and common well-being of humanity in the globalizing world.

The third impediment to EIU in this region is a dearth of research on Asia-Pacific cultures and values. Asia has created and maintained rich and diverse cultural traditions and profound religious faiths in which we could find the guiding principles and essential values for EIU. The aboriginal and immigrant cultures of the Pacific region also constitutes another abundant source of wisdom and beliefs which are relevant to EIU. Fortunately, APNIEVE has recently made an initial but worthwhile effort to draw the core values relating to peace, human rights, democracy and sustainable development from the perspectives of the Asia-Pacific cultures. The pioneering work of APNIEVE is most important for designing and implementing EIU on the basis of the Asia-Pacific values without losing the cultural identity of this region. However, I feel that there is a serious lack of comprehensive and systematic studies on the theme. It is important to conduct research on the theme by applying a multi-disciplinary approach of historical, philosophical, sociological and anthropological studies. Such research will provide a firm intellectual foundation for EIU which is relevant to the Asia-Pacific context.

Lastly, another impediment is the fragmentary and divisional concept and approach of EIU. As above-mentioned, EIU includes a wide scope of the objectives, contents and approaches of education addressed to various global problems. Thus, EIU has often been carried out in a fragmentary way, not in an integrated way. It is necessary to devise and apply an integrated and holistic approach to EIU to improve the effectiveness of education. Since this issue is very important and needs a little longer discussion, the following section will more elaborately deal with the issue.

4. A Holistic Concept of EIU
A man perceives and responds to his or her social, political, and economic environment as a whole. He or she learns through the entire process of social life in the organically integrated society. Therefore education must be based upon holistic views of a learner, knowledge, education and the society.

As mentioned earlier, EIU is currently implemented in many countries under the many different titles using diverse approaches, each focusing on a limited scope of the goals and contents concerning the major world problems. In this regard, the recent normative instruments and declarations of UN and UNESCO have continuously stressed the necessity to develop an integrated and holistic concept of education. It was also strongly recommended by the feasibility study of ACEIU and by several participants in the Regional Workshop on International Understanding and Peace in Asia and the Pacific, held in Seoul in September 1999.

Holism in EIU could be represented in several aspects of education. First, an integrated and holistic concept and approach could be applied to the goals and contents of EIU. The various programmes of EIU could be integrated or combined into a comprehensive programme by interrelating the contents concerning global problems in terms of their causes, effects, and resolutions. Secondly, a learner in EIU should be viewed as a whole person. The main objective of EIU is to teach people how to live peacefully and harmoniously with others and develop the whole personality of learners. Thus, EIU must aim to exert influence upon the whole scope of personal capabilities and attributes; knowing, understanding, valuing and acting of a learner, although the latter ones seems to be more important for EIU. Thirdly, an integrated and holistic approach should also be applied to the various forms of education, including formal or non-formal educational process. The development or learning of an individual is facilitated by many different socializing agents, such as parents, teachers, peer groups, youth organizations, mass media, internet, civil organizations and social movements and ever work places. If EIU is to be effectively carried out, all the learning experiences of individuals, in and out of school, should be interrelated and interwoven in a way to complement and support one another.
Fourthly, the teaching and learning process should also be viewed in the integrated and holistic concept. It is a generally accepted pedagogic principle that the broader involvement of a learner in learning processes ensures the achievement of higher effectiveness in education. A lecture method which classroom instruction is usually heavily relied upon requires a learner to be only partially involved. In order to enhance the effectiveness of EIU, it demands teachers broaden a learner's active involvement in the teaching/learning processes by using such methods as participatory, interactive and experiential learning. Fifthly, a holistic approach to education implies that EIU must constitute a coherent whole within the curricula across many subject-matters, such as history, geography, language, civic or moral education, music and physical education. Since a man lives and learns in an integrated social reality not in a fragmented conceptual world, such an integrated curriculum for EIU seems to be more relevant and effective than a separate subject for EIU, particularly for young children.

Lastly, a holistic approach to education must be applied to the target groups of EIU. This point was rightly stressed by Mr. Koichiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO. He said in his opening address at the Fifth Session of the Advisory Committee on Education,

"A holistic approach to learning implies that we also take a holistic approach to the learners. Alternative delivery systems must be developed to reach street children and out-of-school youth, semi-literate or illiterate young adults, the poorest girls and women, isolated rural populations, ethnic minorities, those with disabilities."

Ladies and gentlemen,

To conclude, I have to say a few more words to ask for your cooperation for ACEIU.

Education for international understanding must be placed at the center of all the forms of education, whether formal or non-formal, in the globalizing world. It is essential not only for peace-building in the world, but also for the self-realization of an individual as a world citizen. It is our shared hope that ACEIU plays a crucial role in promoting EIU in the Asia-Pacific region. The Asia-Pacific region has abundant intellectual resources and
high aspirations for building a peaceful and developed world. I am very hopeful that ACEIU could play an important role in the future in promoting and strengthening EIU through mobilizing the intellectual resources and moral support of all the member states of UNESCO in this region. Thus, I believe that the future of ACEIU is bright.