



## Equity and Quality in Education

Education is a powerful tool for combating poverty, promoting justice, advancing sustainable development, and fostering global peace. Ensuring that future generations have access to equitable, high-quality education has become a shared goal among nations. This consensus has led to valuable experiences that can guide efforts to improve educational accessibility and create fair, high-quality educational systems.

In a rapidly changing world, equitable and quality education is the foundation for helping future generations realize their potential and thrive. China, for instance, has launched the *Strategy of Invigorating China Through Science and Education*, aiming to cultivate a strong workforce for its modernization drive and develop education that meets the needs of its people. Similarly, the United Nations' *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* lists *Quality Education* as a sustainable development goal, aiming to ensure inclusive, equitable education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. In the face of serious challenges like poverty, insecurity, and governance issues, the world must collaborate to build a multilateral governance system and use education to promote an inclusive, equitable society.

The Lancang-Mekong region, spanning 800,000 square kilometers and home to 326 million people from over 90 ethnic groups, represents a large and diverse population of learners. The countries in this region face numerous challenges, including limited access to basic education, gender inequality, regional disparities, insufficient educational funding, inadequate infrastructure, varying quality in vocational and adult education, and an underdeveloped lifelong learning system. Addressing these challenges and creating an education system that is both equitable and high-quality is a critical issue for the Lancang-Mekong countries.

To address these concerns, there is a need to focus on educational equity and quality throughout the development process. One potential solution is the creation of a “Lancang-Mekong Project” aimed at achieving sustainable educational development goals.



## **Sub-Themes**

### **Universal Education: Basic Education and Educational Coverage**

Basic education is the cornerstone of national education systems, playing a pivotal role in shaping societal progress and driving national development. It is essential for nurturing top-tier innovators. According to the SDG Index and Dashboards Report (2016–2018) by the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network, education accessibility in the Lancang-Mekong countries ranks in the lower-middle range.

Given the large and diverse population of learners in the Lancang-Mekong countries, key questions to consider include: how can we better explore a diversity of educational resources, while continuously increasing the supply of quality resources? How can we create mechanisms to ensure the sustainable distribution of these resources?

### **Equal Education: Access to Equal Educational Opportunities and Resources**

Educational equity is fundamental for achieving social equality. Ensuring educational equity not only enables individuals to realize their fundamental rights and unlock their potential, but also contributes to the advancement of social fairness and fosters high-quality, sustainable economic growth.

Key questions that need attention include: How can we ensure that all people, regardless of ethnicity, gender, religious beliefs, regional differences, or economic status, have access to equal educational resources and opportunities? How can we strengthen policy support and mechanisms for vulnerable groups to ensure equal treatment in their educational process?

### **Quality Education: Higher Education and Innovation Incubator**

A new wave of scientific and technological advancements is reshaping the global innovation landscape and transforming the world economy. In this context, higher education institutions are crucial in training world-class talent with innovative



capabilities and developing the skilled workforce for economic and social development.

Key questions that need attention include: how can we enhance the capacity of these institutions to foster innovation and talent development in the region? How can higher education systems be optimized, disciplines refined, and teaching methods improved to boost quality of talent? How can faculty development channels be expanded to attract and retain exceptional educators, building a strong teaching force? What mechanisms can be put in place to stimulate innovation, improve the commercialization of scientific and research findings, and create a supportive environment for nurturing world-class innovators?

### **Infrastructure of Education: Foundation for Sustainable Education**

In the Lancang-Mekong countries, socio-economic disparities between urban and rural areas have led to uneven distribution of educational resources. Underdeveloped regions face challenges such as inadequate infrastructure and the outflow of skilled educators, which limits the development of quality education. This underscores the urgent need for increased investment and improvement in educational infrastructure.

Key questions that need attention include: How can countries attract a variety of stakeholders to invest in education, addressing shortages in school buildings, teaching equipment, and other resources? How can systematic, long-term education investment plans be developed to ensure the effective use of funds? How can regional collaboration be strengthened to promote the development and sharing of educational resources, addressing common challenges?

### **Diversity in Education: Vocational and Adult Education**

As society progresses, vocational and adult education play a vital role in workforce development and regional growth. However, the vocational and adult education systems in the Lancang-Mekong region face challenges, including misalignment with market demand, insufficient policy support, and low social recognition.

Key questions that need attention include: How can we promote the development of



diverse education systems? How can we allocate educational resources in a balanced and effective way to build a more diversified education system? How can we strengthen policy support and increase awareness to address individual educational needs and improve education quality? How can we expand corporate involvement in vocational education and adult education, enhance the practicality of these programs, and better align them with society's need for a diverse and skilled workforce?

### **Lifelong Education: Learning Across All Age Groups**

Promoting lifelong education involves creating inclusive opportunities for individuals of all ages and backgrounds. With technological advancements and globalization, lifelong education helps cultivate adaptability and innovative thinking, strengthening society's ability to navigate future challenges and uncertainties.

Key questions that need attention include: How can the Lancang-Mekong countries open up various social education channels, maximize the use of available educational resources, and provide abundant lifelong education opportunities for all? How can we effectively promote the concept of lifelong education and strengthen individuals' motivation and commitment to engaging to continuous learning?

