

# EDUCATION

## Updates

02 July 2018

### ASIA & PACIFIC

**Brunei Darussalam: Japan and Brunei Darussalam expected to signed Agreement on Technical Cooperation [MOFAT].** In an effort to enhance existing bilateral relationship between the two countries, the Government of Japan has expressed intention to provide assistance to Brunei Darussalam in promoting economic activities and social development of the Sultanate. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, both governments are currently reviewing the content of the agreement which is expected to benefit Brunei Darussalam in terms of obtaining technical assistance from Japan such as providing technical training to students.

**Thailand: Thai university ranking plummet [Bangkok Post].** Most of Thailand's top universities plunged in the 2018 Asia University Rankings released by Times Higher Education magazine. Chulalongkorn University slid from 151-160 band to 164th while King Mongkut's Institute of Technology ladkrabang fell to 201-250, from the 181-190 group. Mahidol University now stands as the top-ranked Thai institute on the list—maintaining 97th place from the previous year. [LINK](#)

**Australia: 25 and unemployed: the quarter-life crisis hurting young people [Sydney Morning Herald].** They call it the quarter-life crisis. A growing number of young Australians do not have full-time work by the time they turn 25 despite 60% holding tertiary education. Michael Ouzas, who has a master's degree in landscape architecture from Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, has spend the past 12 months looking for work and is desperately trying to avoid the quarter-life crisis. He estimates to have applied for at least 50 jobs. [LINK](#)

### AFRICA & MIDDLE-EAST

**South Africa: VR learning solutions to revolutionize math and science education [Biz Community South Africa].** A number of provincial governments of South Africa are in talks to pilot the introduction of virtual reality (VR) learning solutions in selected government schools, with the aim to improve science and math engagement. Teaching and learning through VR helps to close to gap between knowledge

and understanding. Learners can experience the immersive VR world in which they can travel to New York City, take virtual train rides to learn about the concept of relative motion or step inside a green leaf to see the production of oxygen through photosynthesis. Initial results from testing has led to 70% of learners indicating that the addition of VR to their syllabi would motivate them to take science and math related subjects in the future. [LINK](#)

**Iran: Bans English being taught in primary schools [Independent UK].** Iran has banned English from being taught in primary schools after the country's Supreme Leader said learning the language in the early years paved the way for a Western 'cultural invasion'. A senior education official announced the language had been banned because the Iranian culture of students is established during primary level. [LINK](#)

### AMERICAS

**United States of America: Educators Turn to Programs for Top Students to Narrow the "Excellence Gap" [New York Times].** From the 1960s, closing the "achievement gap" has been the focus of much education policy for decades with the goal to bring the academic performance of struggling students from low-income backgrounds up to the average level of their middle-class or more privileged peers. Some education leaders feel that the focus on advanced students is misplaced and believe that one way to widen access to advanced programs is to rely less on standardized tests. [LINK](#)

**Canada: Math Catcher program helps Indigenous high school students by using storytelling, traditions and culture [The Globe and Mail].** Reinelda Sankey struggled in math. She barely passed the Grade 11 course on a second try and did not pursue the subject in Grade 12. it was a difficult decision as math is a compulsory entrance prerequisite for higher education. Earlier this month, she graduated with a bachelor of science degree in health sciences and hopes to attend medical school. The outreach program that helped her succeed is called Math Catcher which infuses Indigenous storytelling, traditions and culture into mathematics lessons. [LINK](#)

## **EUROPE**

**United Kingdom: Children’s Word of the Year Revealed [BBC Education].** “Plastic” has been declared children’s word of the year after analysis of the stories submitted by five to 13-year-olds in a writing competition. The word appeared 3,359 times in the 134,790 stories submitted—up from 100% from last year. David Attenborough’s Blue Planet II programme is credited with influencing children’s writing, with titles such as The Plastic Shore and The Evil Mr Plastic, being sent in. [LINK](#)

**United Kingdom: Social media giants should have a ‘duty of care’ to their users, universities minister says [Telegraph].** Sam Gyimah, whose ministerial brief covers science, research and innovation, said that technology companies must take more responsibility for the damage they cause to young people such as addiction, bullying and grooming when using their services. New measures are being considered to rein in the worst excesses of online tech companies amid fears a generation of young people is being harmed by unregulated use of social media and online gaming platforms. According to the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children’s analysis of “unsafe” networking and gaming sites, Facebook is allowing British children to be exposed to violence and bullying. [LINK](#)

**Iceland: Reykjavik Preschool System to Expand Substantially in Next Six Years [Iceland Review].** Over eight hundred spaces will be added to Reykjavik’s preschool system over the next six years, RÚV reports. This will be accomplished by building five to six new preschools, at a total cost of roughly ISK 3 Billion [US\$30,210,000]. The proposal was first presented to the city council, where it received the approval of the majority of council members, and then announced at a press conference in mid June. [LINK](#)

**France: To make school compulsory from the age of three [Telegraph].** France is to make school compulsory from three years old, President Emmanuel Macron, has announced, insisting that the earlier children are in class, the higher their chances of success and integration in society. Currently, school is compulsory in France at the age of six, when primary school starts, but in reality the vast majority - almost 98 per cent - of three-year-olds attend nursery. France has a ratio of one nursery teacher to 22 children com-

pared to an EU average of one to 13. The government is also considering increasing vocational training for nursery teachers who start with little hands-on experience. [LINK](#)

## **ASEAN**

**The Third Arab-ASEAN International Conference on Higher Education [Arab News].** The conference organized by the International Islamic University in cooperation with the Association of Arab Universities was held last week in Kuala Lumpur. The aim of the meeting was to discuss the challenges facing higher education and ways to enhance the overall quality of the sector. Participants suggested ways to develop tools and mechanisms for measuring the performance of universities, and shared the experiences of each other. [LINK](#)

## **UNESCO**

**Focus on work-based learning to foster youth employment in Arab region [UNESCO].** In a workshop organized by UNESCO Regional Office in Beirut, Lebanon, representatives examined and discussed the status of work-based learning (WBL) programmes for young people in the Arab region, and UNESCO shared the preliminary findings of a new comparative synthesis study that draws upon country studies from Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman and Tunisia. WBL can improve the relevance of TVET. The youth unemployment rate in the region is one of the highest in the world. It was emphasized that WBL could benefit the employment rates by being a driver for expanding and improving the relevance of TVET for young people. [LINK](#)

**Schools in over 30 countries to trial ocean literacy manual [UNESCO].** Ocean literacy is defined as the understanding of our influence on the ocean, and the ocean’s influence on us—including as a major regulator of the Earth’s climate. As such, ocean literacy is an essential tool for all citizens, whether we live along the coastline, up on the mountains or in a landlocked country. In a bid to spread awareness, UNESCO along with schools in thirty-six countries around the world will take part in a pilot project to test the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission’s (IOC) latest flagship publication, Ocean Literacy for All—A Toolkit, through the UNESCO Associated Schools Network (ASPnet). [LINK](#)