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DepEd gives focus on education in rural areas

Education Secretary Jesli Lapus called on educators in the Asia Pacific to look for creative approaches to bring education to different groups of marginalized learners especially in rural areas.

“The educational needs of children from isolated areas, remote and rural communities and religious, linguistic and ethnic minorities require a different mindset and a new paradigm,” he added.

“Our task is to design highly-responsive programs that give learners in more difficult circumstances the right to quality education while being sensitive to their economic, social, geographic and other personal circumstances,” Lapus said.

The DepEd chief sounded the call during the “Regional Conference on Multiple Approaches of Education for Rural Areas: Lesson from Good Practices” held in Cebu recently.

Both DepEd and World Bank organized the event which drew some 100 participants from countries in the East Asia and Pacific Region like Cambodia, China, East Timor, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Thailand, Tonga, and Vietnam,.

Lapus enjoined participants to come up with pioneering and out-of-the-box recommendations on how Education For All (EFA) can be achieved.

The conference included discussions to help participants identify best practices, examples, pedagogical methodology, education delivery options, policy recommendations that would be useful to their own country so that EFA goals may be achieved by 2015.

Lapus pointed out that there is a need for more schooling options and alternative learning systems to reach the otherwise underserved sector. “We should explore varying strategies such as multi-grade approaches, adoption of Indigenous People’s curriculum, introduction of ICT-enhanced learning, promotion of multi-lingual education, or legislation of subsidies for private schooling and service contracting,” said Lapus.

Seminar participants include teachers, researchers, development partners, government officials, education managers, and policymakers in education, and representatives from the labor and finance sector.

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Among the speakers are Dr. Nanzhao Zhou, Director of Centre for Rural Education in UNESCO who spoke on regional experience on improving access and quality of education in rural areas and Vicky Colbert de Arboleda who shared the Escuela Nueva System- a good practice in multigrade schooling.

“While education should be inclusive and must benefit all, it must also be so designed so as to respond to the unique needs of each learner,” Lopus stressed.

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