【Concluding Discussions】

Kazuhiro Yoshida (Professor, Center for the study of International Cooperation in Education (CICE), Hiroshima University)

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished panelists, thank you very much for your great engagement.

In concluding this session, we want to make sure that we all understand that there are diverse approaches to the engagement of the community for the betterment of education. We have to clearly identify the purpose of community involvement, what can and cannot be done, diverse approaches as well as culturally, historically and regionally defined differences. It is important to enhance our awareness of all these aspects.

Even though we have not had a chance to discuss about community, I think it's also good to define what we mean by 'community'. In Japan if you live in a condominium in a large metropolitan area it is often the case that you don't even know your next-door neighbor. Yet if you talk about community building maybe such persons would still insist that they are engaged in some form of community activity. Well, is that really community activity? So this is also an interesting aspect, in that people may have different definitions of community and community involvement.

We have had rich discussion about this very important topic and I would like to ask our distinguished panelists to make any additional comments that they may have about today's forum.

Abou Diarra (Chief of Education Decentralization/DeconcentrationBureau, Ministry of Education, Literacy and National Languages, Mali)

Thank you very much. I really liked the way our interventions were summarized by the moderator. Of course every country has a different reality, and while we are talking about the same thing, let's remember that on the ground things are all different.

The idea of decentralizing means that we share prerogatives, naturally between the state structure and the local structure, and with territorial collectivities, and everything's got to do with how much we share. We usually succeed when we have pilot projects, but then the project organizers go, we are left on our own and the experiment crashes. In my country when there is an experiment we try to be really strict about looking at every aspect, and as soon as we succeed then we think that's it, which doesn't work. The experiment is important because then we can see what everybody's responsibility is, but that learning phase has to be done very well and after that one really has to work in order to generalize the experience.

Managing the schools along with the communities is another aspect of paramount importance. First, let's look at what the community thinks about the school. There is the money factor of course, but certainly the most important factor is that communities realize that schools matter and that they can do something at that level. This is when the community can start working with the schools. These are the elements that I wanted to underscore.

Waraiporn Sangnapaboworn (Head of International Education Section, Office of National Education Commission, Thailand)

Thank you Professor Yoshida. I would like to speak about efforts to achieve education for all according to the Jomtien (Thailand) Declaration on EFA. Incidentally, Jomtien will again host this [Educational for All] conference from March 22 – 24 of this year. After 20 years we review how successfully countries have been able to increase enrolment in basic education.

The three main purposes for reforming education in Thailand are: to improve the quality of education; increase access to school for children and mobilize resources in communities for improving schools. We encourage every part of

the country to initiate its own way of reforming or collaborating between school and community. The successful methods are designated best practices. We learn lessons from success or failure and we organize forums for teachers, schools and communities to share their experiences. There must be a central organization to coordinate these forums; otherwise the actors will not come to meet each other. What we have used is the knowledge management or KM technique, meaning that you share the knowledge of your success. And thus we can learn from each other about what worked or not and there is sincerity in working together to improve the quality of education in our communities. Of course achieving EFA is not the sole responsibility of schools, but requires participation from all parts of society, especially parents. Compared to other stakeholders, parents always come first and are direct stakeholders in education. So with regard to domestic implementation, Thailand provides many platforms for practitioners to share their experiences.

I would like to go beyond the boundary of Thailand. When I hear of the successes from Mali and Niger it inspires me to think that we should also have this international collaboration. In SE Asia, we can share experiences and expand to wider areas of the region. With the approach of the ASEAN community in 2015 in which we are expected to expand many areas of economic, political, cultural and social cooperation, I think educational cooperation is one of the leading activities that we should embark on. So for me, nowadays we can look not necessarily to other continents, but to our near neighbors in terms of how we can co-exist harmoniously through educational cooperation. My former advisor, Professor Yoko Murata, who is present at today's forum, taught me about international cooperation for education development and I think that I would like to implement her suggestions before I retire. So we will start our cooperation with our neighboring countries and I am thinking about exchanging experiences with other African countries such as Mali, Niger and Zimbabwe. We don't need to meet physically, but can make ample use of ICT. I also think JICA can help by organizing a forum for us or facilitating this cooperation; and I'm happy to say that we won't need much money.

I found this forum meaningful and useful and wish its continued existence. I wish also to thank the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Hiroshima and Tsukuba Universities and JICA for organizing this form and allowing me to learn so much from it. Thank you very much.

Noriaki Mizumoto (Associate Professor, College of Education, School of Human Sciences, University of Tsukuba)

With innovation, generally speaking, it is sometimes not clear to the innovator what the purpose of the innovation is. What is important is to identify the main purpose, called 'sense-making'. In the pilot phase, maybe there is sense-making and it is found to be significant. Now, if it is to be implemented more generally, it should not simply be copied from the initial pilot phase, but its relevance to a particular community needs to be considered; why a school has to be involved with the community or *vice versa*. I think that should be the major outcome of research in innovation in education. In building the relationship between the community and the school it is necessary to identify where in the overall phase one is located and for what objective the implementation is being carried out. It is also important to have a diversity of perspectives. There may be differences in opinions among the stakeholders, however we should capitalize on the conflict, and should not try to contain, but reveal it. There is the need to overcome these conflicts in the process of sense-making.

So today we have been able to share the various experiences and discuss this matter from a diversity of perspectives. This has been a very good process of sense-making and I think it is necessary to continue this kind of process in order to make schools better. Thank you very much.

Gerald W. Fry (Professor, College of Education and Human Development, Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development, University of Minnesota, USA)

First I would like to thank my new colleagues who have helped me to better understand the impressive change

taking place in India, Mali and Niger, and would like to share just a few final reflections.

At the end of our discussion I really liked the ideas brought by Professor Ishii and Dr. Waraiporn about moderate centralization or moderate decentralization. In my country we have too much decentralization and this has resulted in extreme inequalities.

I would also strongly emphasize the two 'E's as really crucial issues: Empowerment and Equity. There has been a lot of discussion about financial responsibility; we have to go beyond binary thinking. Education is so important that we have to maximize both national and local financial contributions for improvement in the quality of education.

This morning Abou Diarra very much stressed to idea of shared responsibility, which is a concept I like. So many people should share responsibility for education, not just the government.

Professor Govinda has shared with us how much remarkable linguistic and cultural diversity exists in India and I think decentralization can contribute to the preservation of linguistic and cultural diversity.

My final point is about the two 'Cs': Creative Collaboration is crucial among all the key local stakeholders in order to realize this wonderful ideal from the National Education Act of Thailand: All for Education and Education for All.

Thank you very much for the distinguished participants' very insightful and informative questions.

R. Govinda (Vice-Chancellor, National University of Educational Planning and Administration, India)

Let me thank Hiroshima University and the Government of Japan for giving me this very special and unique opportunity. I treasure the learning that it has imparted to me in my professional life, through listening to the variety of ideas that have been discussed.

I will take four messages from this conference. First, in listening to the experiences of Japan and Thailand, I realize that they are far ahead not only in terms of using community involvement for improving logistics, increasing resources and getting people together, but they have also looked at how the community can be impacted by its own involvement in education. This is something that can be examined further. We probably won't be able to implement this everywhere, but even in India, there are some school settings in which some of the experiences of Japan can be usefully implemented.

Second, I think listening to our friends from Africa has been very enlightening to me. Discussions within and outside of today's forum have given me the opportunity to listen and understand with greater insight about what is happening in both countries and also, very importantly, how Japan has been investing in educational development there. I would say at this juncture that I also have a selfish interest in knowing more about this, as at the moment my university had been charged by the government of India with the responsibility of establishing an institution like ours in Africa to serve the pan-African interest. So listening to what has been happening in Africa and how Japan is investing its time and resources for the development of education in Africa has been of great interest to me. I look forward to working together not only with our African friends, but also our Japanese colleagues as to how we can collaborate particularly in the policy planning and management aspects of education investment in Africa.

Third, I think listening to the variety of experiences about what works or doesn't work in the different countries reminds me of one important lesson, which is that governments always come up with only one policy for the entire country, but community participation shows that this does not always work, one size does not fit all. The contexts are different in different places and we must be conscious of this. We may need to look at developing a pluralistic approach in formulating relevant policies for community participation.

The last message that comes to my mind is that the modern school is a very peculiar place. It's a place where everything is standardized. All teachers will have to acquire the same kind of qualification. They have to go to the classrooms at the same time. The school works at the same time all over the country and they have to teach the same curriculum, which is prescribed from outside and they have to conduct the same type of examinations. In the midst

of this we bring in the community, which is a very uneven animal. The community members do not come with the same kind of qualifications, backgrounds or expectations, and this is not easily to deal with. School administrators and teachers are all used to seeing the same thing being followed by everyone at a given point in time. When community comes, it disturbs the routine that teachers are used to. What is really required, therefore when we speak of 'capacity-building'? Most often the capacity-building only deals with some sort of skills and knowledge: what ought to happen, how it should happen, how to conduct the school management committee meetings and such. However I think the most important message that I have received is to bring for ourselves an element of appreciating diversity. We should learn to celebrate diversity, not just tolerate it. Invariably teachers and headmasters feel that they are only tolerating the parents coming into the school. They don't want them to come, but they tolerate them. I think we should begin to celebrate diversity. The day that we begin to celebrate diversity is the day we will realize the importance of the community's role in schools. Thank you very much for giving me this opportunity.

Ibo Issa (National Coordinator, ONEN(Organisation Nigérienne des Educateurs Novateurs), NigerPrincipal Coordinator, JICA School For All Project)

Thank you. Today's discussion has showed that in all cases, community participation is a necessity and it needs to be adapted according to the realities of the place where it is instituted. This is because when we think of community participation, unless it reflects the communities themselves, it does not make sense. Within the same country people may not have the same needs and so if we try force standardization on the community I don't think it will work. At any level, regardless of the country, I think that communities can always contribute.

The opposite point of view has not really been dealt with today. Our experiences have shown that teachers were, at first, very reluctant. They were being very centralized and they thought that the community's participation was going to be an obstacle to the school. This can be yet another major issue because the teacher is a very important actor within the school. In some schools where communities tried to take part in the cafeteria, for example, there was significant resistance from the school staff. However, I think people have begun to understand and this is an irreversible movement. After assessment of this situation, the ministry had to step in and now there is a director within the school council. It has been said that the teachers are not allowed to be the directors of these committees. That is how we were able to resolve this question; otherwise it would have been very difficult to manage.

I would like to reiterate that in two weeks we will be meeting again to exchange information on West African countries. This is going to be an extension of today's symposium and we will be bringing many novel ideas from today's forum to feed that discussion. I would like to thank our hosts today and we would like to keep on expanding discussions like these because the educational issue is a socio-economic issue that impacts all countries. So we really have to try to find solutions. Thank you very much.

Kazuhiro Yoshida (Professor, Center for the study of International Cooperation in Education (CICE), Hiroshima University)

Thank you all very much. It takes a village to raise a child. Hillary Clinton popularized this proverb, widely thought to be of African origin, in the title of a 1996 book. In the context of this forum it means that wherever a country is in the world, the mutual relations between the community and the school have become the classic issue and at the same time the new issue.

The question arises as to who the community members are. I would say that each person here is a community member. Therefore, from that perspective we all need to think about how to tackle these very important issues that each country is facing. I believe that today's forum has provided us with tremendous ideas on how these issues can be

addressed.

With that we would like to close the eighth Japan Education Forum. On behalf of the four organizers I extend appreciation to Professor Diarra and all the panelists for their active involvement. Thanks also to all the persons who have participated fully in this session especially our simultaneous interpreters who have helped us with what has been a very long day. Thank you all very much.