【Dialogue between Speakers and Participants】

<u>Annop Pongwat (Chiang Mai University, Thailand)</u>

We seem to be operating very effectively and I will do something the other panel didn't do and that is to give each of our panelists the opportunity to speak for one more minute and refer to the individual presentations we have heard. As Mark Bray pointed out, we can get a copy of the report which he referred to and read from that and discuss among ourselves the findings of that report. I imagine there are many things we are going to talk about and especially from our own national experiences which are very important cases and our own country examples.

I think the situation of governance and the role of international cooperation still matters in a number of countries including Uganda, as Albert Byamugisha mentioned in his conclusion about SWAp processes and decentralization. In many countries, including Thailand, they are advocating this, and he said that in Uganda it has improved education delivery. I wonder how this translates to quality. By delivering an education service with the local governments in the delivery role, they are given more authority, and that is what is happening in Thailand. I'm not asking the question but just putting forth the comment that one of the outcomes in Uganda was reforming the Ministry of Education and Sports and it would be very interesting learning about that in detail. I think we would like to know how Uganda is reforming itself drastically to provide better quality education.

Joseph Chimombo spoke of Malawi's free primary education campaign and made comparison with Uganda. In Thailand we are also beginning to form 15 years of free education beginning from age 4. I wish my colleague from the Thai Embassy could be here, but he is with our Prime Minister who is speaking to Japanese officials right now encouraging them to invest in Thailand. When we think of 15 years of free education in Thailand, much of the evidence is that such policies are problematic. I wonder about the different contexts and situations, and how to make it work. So these are just a few of my comments, and now I'd like to give each one of the panelists one or two more minutes to comment and then we will invite the audience to join in our discussion.

<u>Mark Bray (IIEP/UNESCO)</u>

It is a special privilege to have more time, and I thank you for that. I would like to use it to ask a question to my fellow panelist. Joseph, if I'm hearing you correctly you refer to free primary education by saying this means:

- no tuition fees,
- no school development funds, and
- no uniforms.

It seems to me that you are adding:

- no quality.

Is that right? Because we do have this issue of quantity and quality, and actually nothing is free because it always has to be paid for by someone. So we still have to find the resources from somewhere, and we have to think how those resources are controlled and what accountability mechanisms are utilized. Again I hear you refer to genuine decentralization, and I wonder which forms of decentralization are genuine and which are not. Fee-free education in Malawi sounds to me like a centralized policy from the central government.It is not consistent with decentralization, since communities that wish to collect fees in order to maintain quality are forbidden to do so.

<u>Joseph Chimombo (University of Malawi)</u>

Given the mandate or opportunity to advise my government, I would recommend that we wipe out this fee free education concept in our minds and seriously examine how we can provide for the education sector. The politicians

win on their promise of free primary education but in reality nothing is free. We have done many studies that have demonstrated to parents that the government cannot provide exercise books, pencils, food, all of these things which do matter to the poor family. Of course then when they hear that all this is free it is very very difficult to enforce anything else except their expectation that education is "free" and therefore government must provide.

Albert Byamugisha (Ministry of Education and Sports, Uganda)

Maybe I should comment here on what we have learned through reforming our Ministry of Education to achieve what we have achieved. First of all, restructuring the Ministry of Education and Sports was in line with the expectations of the Education Sector Strategic Plan framework which has improved the Ministry's capacity to manage a sector wide approach. These changes along with other internal sector wide capacity building exercises have generated a sense of continuous capacity enhancement at national and local levels. Secondly, an institutional mechanism arrangement has been developed whereby the external agencies constituted themselves into the Education Funding Agencies Group (EFAG) while in parallel, the MOES established the Education sector Consultative Committee. These structures have together with the Education sector review process contributed to the enhancement of collective and co-ordinated multi-stakeholder involvement in policy dialogue, planning, management and monitoring of education sector activities. Thirdly, there has been an improvement in Planning and Budgeting. This is done through the planning and budget workshop which is held at the end of March each calendar year. Its main purpose is to review budget performance for the current financial year as well as agree on budget shares for the coming financial year through negotiated trade - offs. This is a highly consultative activity involving participants from Donors , line ministries, Civil Society Organizations, District Local Governments, schools/colleges/Universities and the ministry of education and sports itself. Consensus is built with regard to the financing priorities, budget outlays and performance targets for the next financial year, matched with resources as projected by the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development. And lastly, the education sector enjoys the political good will thus there is financial commitment to at least some of the sector priorities.

Annop Pongwat (Chiang Mai University, Thailand)

I noticed that in Joseph's presentation there was reference to a hidden agenda of the north and lack of mutual trust and respect between Africa and the rest of the international community. I wonder what is the evidence for this and what is the role of international cooperation so that we can learn even from the mistakes we make in establishing mutual trust and respect which could be quite interesting.

Joseph Chimombo (University of Malawi)

In Malawi, we still have vivid memories of what DANIDA did to us in the past. DANIDA came very heavily with massive reforms in the secondary school sub-sector and then one day they woke up and said, we can't deal with this government and left. As I am talking now, our schools are in difficult conditions because DANIDA decided that we were not democratic and they left. So as we participate in events like TICAD there must be mutual trust on both sides including the local level as well. As for the local people, they have very little autonomy and indeed resources and most of the time people who come can see how they have been struggling to provide for their wards. Sometimes I wonder how Uganda has made FTI work for more than 5 years and we're not there. What is the problem? It is so obvious that I'm telling you when you look at the very very poor living conditions we simply can't do anything. We need the trust of others to help us as what DANIDA did to us was surely very bad.

Annop Pongwat (Chiang Mai University, Thailand)

I'm sure we have many optimists in the room so we would like to now turn to our colleagues gathered here in the audience and ask that you limit your comments to a few minutes so we can hear from many of you.

Question 1

Mikiko Nishimura (Kobe University, Japan)

I'd like to ask a question. I'm particularly interested in governance and the balance between the political aspect and local governments. The UPE policy has been politicized quite a lot and is very popular and rapidly making improvements. But without proper strategy there is chaos on the ground. As for political leadership, our study found various areas of conflict. At the district level, decentralization is good but when district councils are allowed to be in charge of how to spend money, they are sometimes not professional. Due to the divisions of other sectors, they may choose the location for a school building in a certain political area which is not a professionally made choice. UPE is discouraging parental involvement as politicians state free education means you don't have to contribute. I find this quite interesting how political leadership is played out in the provisional areas.

Question 2

Demis Kunje (University of Malawi)

I'd like to shed a bit more light and add a few more things to what my colleague has presented here. It is just rhetoric this decentralization. The central office still holds a lot of functions that were supposed to be decentralized such as teacher salaries, recruitment, and so our very own districts cannot recruit their own teachers. Even management at the school level is such that they have to wait for funding. This puts a lot of pressure on the district and head teachers as they have to manage even though they cannot deploy the way they want. If you look at our present situation where a school has only 2 teachers although the district manager knows this very well, there is nothing else that person can do but wait for the Ministry of Education to give them teachers. It is necessary as you saw in the photo for local areas to have more control. It would be far better for the local people to build something very nice for themselves and they would if they were empowered. The Ministry finds it very difficult to come down to that level. We thought maybe decentralization would make a difference but this is not the case.

Question 3

Yuto Kitamura (Nagoya University, Japan)

Thank you very much. I have two points regarding the issue of governance. Always when discussing developing countries we hear about this but how about governance in the international community? There seems to be a very unified approach in the international community which seems to be going in a simple direction of global governance. How can we ensure diversity in the governance of international cooperation? Second, looking back to our own countries, no country has perfect governance even in developed countries. How can we then think about good governance if we don't have agreement on what kind of level of governance is considered good? My questions are related to each other as the international community indicators look at the level of governance. But how can we discuss issues of governance not only in developing countries but in the international community?

Annop Pongwat (Chiang Mai University, Thailand)

Local governments empowered with decision making exist and there are other local areas where this does not occur. I think in this country, Japan, it is within the local government jurisdiction and maybe similar to what is happening

elsewhere. In Thailand now we have a very confusing situation in regards to decentralization and the local branches of the Ministry of Education are demanding to take charge of the local areas but this causes difficulties in independent local governments where power comes from interior claims which are very popular during local elections. There are lots of grounds for comparison and I would encourage that to discuss the experiences of developed countries is also good. One more question, please.

Question 4

Myagmar Ariuntuye (Hitotsubashi University, Japan)

Thank you for your very nice presentation. I want to ask many questions but since time is limited I have prioritized my question which will be directed to Albert Byamugisha. If I understood you, decentralization in Uganda works well not only at the policy level but also at the implementation level. I think that is very good for my own country Mongolia which I think you know has many problems. I think you must have had a lot of problems or challenges along the way and I was just wondering at hearing your presentation you seem as if you have no constraints or problems that you faced during the adaptation and decentralization reform.

Response from the panelists

Albert Byamugisha (Ministry of Education and Sports, Uganda)

To begin with the last question, when you look at my presentation it is optimistic. Now going back to what Mark is saying that with problems come challenges. Everywhere there are problems which we call challenges. What I was looking at is governance of primary education and the role of international cooperation. Definitely I can mention some challenges but I didn't have time to highlight those. One is what Dr. Nishimura from the floor has also mentioned the challenge of implementation.

From the central government point of view, the Education Act 2008 (part of primary education) which was enacted was a move towards improving governance for primary education in Uganda. It was enacted with the following specific objectives; to give full effect to education policy of Government and functions and services by Government; to give full effect to the decentralization of education services; and to give full effect to the Universal Primary Education Policy of Government;

The study conducted with Kobe University on UPE policy implications showed that we still have some challenges at schools and at the local level when we started implementation. The results of this study have shown that at least the central government budgets and releases funds for capitation grants to schools through local governments. The main challenge is late disbursements to schools and accountability.

I limited my presentation to primary education because in terms of resources, primary education sub sector takes the biggest share of the education sector budget in Uganda (i.e. 60%), it is fully decentralized and employs the biggest human resource. It is also big in terms of numbers than other sub-sectors of primary schools, therefore it is important to discuss quality of primary education. Otherwise we take note of tertially subsector.

Mark Bray (IIEP/UNESCO)

I like the questions; and I would like them even more if they produced answers. We know that definitive answers are difficult to achieve since much is a matter of balance and judgment. No country has a perfect governance system, and I have not yet found a country which is fully happy with its education system. Practically every country in the world is reforming. That is the human condition, and it may be good because in that it keeps us looking at ways to improve.

A second observation concerns vocabulary. Words like decentralizing, centralizing, governance and corruption

are often used loosely. We may not be clear when we ourselves use these words, and we may assume that other people have the same meanings as us when they use these words. Scholars have written thick books about the layers of meaning of decentralization in theory and practice. We have many university people in the room, and they can help in conceptualization. Sometimes the practitioners feel that the academics complicate rather than simplify matters. Certainly there is a need for academics to be responsible in making realistic policy recommendations; but academics can also help in showing situations in which reality is more complex than it appears at first sight.

Annop Pongwat (Chiang Mai University, Thailand)

In defense of university professors, the term itself means those who profess otherwise. There are many who work for answers. When you build buildings or bridges that is easy to see but we are discussing terribly divergent questions. Our task is to try and answer these questions.

Joseph Chimombo (University of Malawi)

Thank you Chair and thanks to the two people who asked about political leadership and management. If we look at this as a single item agenda, then to me the issue is that of empowerment. It is true indeed that at the local level the MPs are very strong and they will push for projects in their contingencies. But if the local bureaucrats know what they are doing is professionally sound, they should be able to defend their view to the district assembly. The same applies at the international level. The problem is people coming from Washington will pretend they know our countries better than we do. Surely we should be able to defend the decisions we want to be taken. Donors of course come with money and thus we end up with little room to protect our interests. But surely we must know better about our countries.

Annop Pongwat (Chiang Mai University, Thailand)

We still have a lot of thoughts resulting from these ideas. So for more academic and practical ideas, let's go back to the floor for more questions.

Question 5

Kennedy Shepande (Embassy of Zambia)

I just wanted to find out from the experiences of Uganda in terms of the management of primary school education in relation to the role of missionaries, both local as well as international. I know that Uganda has a very successful education system right from the days of colonization and many of our leaders went to university at Makerere which was backed to a very large extent by missionary support.

Question 6

Maria Teresa Félix (Embassy of Angola)

My question is for Mark Bray. Coming from an African country that used to be a colony for 500 years, I know the impact of our history although it is still hard to define. Listening to all of these beautiful presentations and thinking about your report which we can access on the website, I come back to Joseph knowing what happened in Malawi and the amount of people who passed away to HIV. Complete villages are wiped out of teachers and sometimes students. I wonder whether we are trying to find solutions in the wrong place. Because actually the problems are very big and too complicated but we are dealing with them. When other people come to Africa for evaluation and assessment, they don't know much about us or our context. They just look at what they see when they arrive which is people lacking this, lacking that, but in the face of all these problems we are trying to do our best. My question is can anyone in this

room respond to Joseph's comments? That is, it is high time we look at the reality of the goals and devise strategies that recognize diversity in policy change in the different countries.

Question 7

Satoko Okamoto (System Science Consultants, Inc.)

I'd like to ask Albert Byamugisha about the Uganda situation and specifically about SWAp. For development workers like me if SWAp is realized, we do not need to walk around to many different places with the same documents. However, I have seen many of the countries where I have worked could not make this sector wide approach work well. I can say at a higher level of education it included vocational education and other education but there are areas in which the Ministry of Labor and Ministry of Education overlap and so there must be territories within working places. How did you tackle those problems and what was the solution?

Response from the panelists

Mark Bray (IIEP, UNESCO)

Indeed these are fundamental questions and I want to grapple with the overall direction of where we're going and whose models we're using. We are certainly talking about a globalized model of schooling more and more whether we like it or not. At the same time, we need to contextualize our work in the societies which the school systems serve. This means that variations for different countries and communities will be needed. Ideas can be gained from review of models and experiences in other countries, and judgements must be made about appropriate balances.

Albert Byamugisha (Ministry of Education and Sports, Uganda)

I think I have two questions to answer. The first one very briefly on the management of primary schools from Mr. Shepande from the Zambian Embassy. Yes, in Uganda ownership of primary schools is by: Government, Community (mostly religious institutions) and Private. Majority of the government schools were started by missionaries and management of such schools is controlled by religious institutions and thus still have a hand in the determination of leadership of these schools. Secondly, as to how Uganda has been able to sustain universal primary education and accomplishment of SWAp modality. The reasons why it is working though it failed in other countries are the following:

SWAp was adopted as an alternative modality of cooperation to bring a shift from donor driven project assistance approach that included fragmentation of policy development and allocation of resources; poor ownership and sustainability of new initiatives; and inadequate institutional capacity building to rather a more holistic approach to planning; participation by stakeholders, reporting, monitoring and evaluation.

Institutionalization of the SWAp process using the decentralized government structures has indeed improved education service delivery at both the macro and micro levels, increased stakeholders' participation and circumvented the shortcomings of bureaucratic tendencies. At the same time however, the SWAP process has brought with it an enlarged scope of responsibilities and challenges, and the concomitant material caused both human and institutional capacity gaps at all levels. The central and local government levels staff are either over stretched or lacking the requisite competencies for managing their new and expanded roles and responsibilities.

Because of the growing pressure of the government to broaden post primary opportunities for UPE graduates and the current policy imperative of focusing on UPE, the GoU may not be in position to substantially reduce its dependence on external financial support in the foreseeable future as there is no realistic possibility of generating sufficient local resources of ensuring the sustainability of expanded education sector programmes.

<u>Annop Pongwat (Chiang Mai University, Thailand)</u>

I'm sorry the discussion is getting really interesting however I hope we shall be able to continue in unofficial circles. On behalf of the panel, I would like to thank each of them and I thank all the participants in the room even those of you who didn't get a chance to exchange your opinion. I thank you all and with that call this official discussion to a close.

<u>Kazuhiro Yoshida (Hiroshima University, Japan)</u>

It is indeed a pity that we have to finish just when the discussion was becoming very heated and I wish we had more time. However, even with the limited time available, I do think we have gained insight into the topic as we had hoped. I am very happy that together we could share our diverse values and express our hope for education. On the other hand, we were able to look at specific examples such as SWAp and FTI and a shared approach for an understanding of governance. Thank you so very much for your contribution and I hope that we have been successful in stimulating your thoughts through this discussion.

Although this completes the program of the Sixth Japan Education Forum on behalf of the organizers I would like to thank you all for your participation and to also thank the speakers of Africa who have traveled so far to join us. I would actually like to thank each one of you individually but for now let me take this opportunity to thank the interpreters for their service. Usually at a meeting like this there is some kind of mechanical failure but this time we had no trouble at all so I would like to thank the engineers and if I continue I will thank everyone and go beyond our schedule. We will send out a report of this meeting and hence we have asked you to write down your address in order for you to receive it. Also, please do not forget to fill out the questionnaire in your folder which will help us in planning future events. Once again my sincere appreciation to all for your participation today. Thank you.