

# Executive Summary

## The Japan Education Forum VI (JEF-VI)

### -Collaboration Toward Greater Autonomy in Educational Development-

#### **Outline of the Forum**

The Sixth Japan Education Forum (JEF-VI) was held in Tokyo on February 6, 2009, focusing on “what do we mean by quality of education” from multiple viewpoints and “governance for quality education” including discussion on the role of international cooperation. A total of more than 200 people participated in this forum including many diplomats from government ministries, development cooperation agency representatives, as well as those from universities, think tanks, consultant companies, NGO/NPOs, and the general public. In the morning, keynote speeches were made by Professor Komlavi Francisco Seddoh, the Former Minister of Education and Scientific Research, Togo, and Professor Eiichi Kajita, President of the Hyogo University of Teacher Education. Summaries of the JEF-VI follow.

#### **Keynote Speech by Professor Komlavi Francisco Seddoh, Former Minister of Education and Scientific Research, Togo**

In his speech entitled “Quality and Governance of Education; Challenges Facing Developing Countries” Prof. Seddoh began by outlining the major characteristics of the environment in developing countries and then went on to look specifically at education. He stressed the need to place quality at the heart of the system as the rapid growth of access to education has resulted in teacher and facility shortages. To improve the quality of teaching and learning, education must include all learners as they are the key actors. Furthermore, resources need to be enabled, a safe and welcoming learning environment provided, investment in teachers’ development needs to be made, quality education at the higher education level needs to be addressed and a diversity of systems recognized. Prof. Seddoh continued his speech centering on governance of education in developing countries. The key issues that he addressed were 1) the need to strengthen governance, 2) improving financing of the education system, 3) strengthening decentralization, 4) encouraging more autonomy through school governance and Education for All (EFA), and 5) the importance of teacher governance and monitoring. To sustain progress towards meeting the goals of EFA, there needs to be effective integration of governance and aid by planning within wider poverty reduction strategies. He outlined four areas of reform for better aid governance as 1) a shift from individual projects to system-wide programmes, 2) strengthening national ownership based on a two-way partnership between national governments and donors, 3) the need to align national priorities and use of government systems and 4) strengthening donor cooperation. In conclusion, Prof. Seddoh stated that although there are multiple and significant challenges facing developing countries, policies that emphasize new approaches to teaching and learning while providing adequate learning materials and strong incentives to raise standards would indeed improve the quality of education.

#### **Keynote Speech by Professor Eiichi Kajita, President of the Hyogo University of Teacher Education**

Professor Eiichi Kajita addressed the issues of quality and governance of education from the perspective of Japan’s experience. His keynote speech centered on the major changes being introduced into the primary and secondary education curriculum from this year in Japan. He also explained the new system for teacher training and the renewing of teacher license. The third area of major change in Japan is that of higher education where quality will need to be pursued. In regards to the question of what is meant by quality, Prof. Kajita highlighted three points: 1) academic performance, for which results can be seen immediately; 2) the abilities to think and to express oneself, which become apparent over time; and 3) things for which we do not know how or when they will manifest themselves as they differ

from student to student. He also stated that education has an important role to play in producing students who care about themselves as well as others and desire to make a contribution to society.

Specific areas in which Japan will concentrate reform efforts are in 1) mathematics and science study, 2) the study of English as a global language beginning in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade of elementary school, 3) renewing interest in the study of the traditional culture of Japan, and 4) moral education. Using these four areas as pillars of reform, Prof. Kajita said that Japan needs to reinstate the commitment to hard work that was the backbone of Japanese education but has weakened due to the affluent society that developed.

As for the question about student-centered learning, which has been introduced in various countries since the 1970s, although in principle, it is important, students cannot learn adequately if the method remains superficial and just focuses on letting children do what they want to do. He emphasized the importance of teaching students while supporting them.

### **Panel Sessions**

Two panel sessions were held in the afternoon to define quality of education from multiple viewpoints and to examine the role of international cooperation as it pertains to governance for quality education. Many participants from the floor contributed to the discussion with questions for the panelists. Summaries of the sessions follow.

#### **Panel Session 1:**

The theme of the first session was “What Do We Mean by Quality of Education?: From Multiple Viewpoints.” Dr. Ho Thanh My Phuong, Assistant Director, Southeast Asian Ministries of Education Organization-Regional Training Center Vietnam served as moderator, and experts from Ghana, Kenya, UNESCO - Chile and Japan gave panel presentations during the session.

Dr. Joseph Ampiah, Director of the Centre for Research on Improving Quality of Primary Education in Ghana, focused on perspectives of educational quality questioning the basic input-process-output model which is important to many nations. He stressed that financial resources (input), which support teaching and learning, are decreasing in Ghana and examined how this will affect the disparity between urban and rural areas. Using one outcome variable of student achievement, TIMSS 2007 performance, Dr. Ampiah reported that the greater proportion of Ghanaian students could not even reach the lower benchmark in science. He concluded that as there are Ghanaians who go abroad and are internationally competitive, the equal distribution of educational resources is necessary to ensure quality education.

Ms. Hanako Senuma, Senior Researcher of the National Institute for Education Policy Research, Japan, addressed the issue of quality of education by reporting longitudinal data on international mathematics achievement. She pointed out the differences among countries in terms of the characteristics of student outcomes in regards to ability and interest. Although Japan has high achievement, this is accompanied by low interest in the study of mathematics. Students in Singapore, however, report both high achievement as well as high attitudes. As the aim for mathematical literacy is for students to be able to make well-founded judgments and engage with mathematics in ways that enhance their lives, quality must be defined from more than one perspective when analyzing student outcomes, including their interest as well as their academic achievement.

Prof. Daniel Sifuna, from the Department of Educational Foundations, Kenyatta University, Kenya, stressed that the definition of quality need not be a difficult concept. He outlined the various approaches as humanist, behaviourist, critical and indigenous, the latter of which reasserts the importance of a type of education that is relevant to the socio-cultural settings of the learner. Defining educational quality by national examinations looks only to the cognitive achievement of the pupils and does not reflect how well students can support and help strengthen the values found in their society. He concluded that good quality education facilitates the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes that

have intrinsic value and also help to address important human goals.

Dr. Héctor Valdés, the Coordinator of the Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education, UNESCO-Santiago, introduced a theoretically approached definition to quality. If one uses an imperialist approach to quality, the comparison is made in which something is superior or inferior. However education must focus on an absolute approach as it occurs not only at school but also in the home and society. In Latin America and the Caribbean variables which are used for evaluation are equity, relevance, effectiveness and efficiency. The result is a focus on education as a human right. Dr. Valdés concluded that when good will is manifested, it will prevail and the human population will achieve quality education.

There were various questions and comments from the floor regarding the presentations. The topics were wide-ranging beginning with the necessity for teacher training especially for those who enter the teaching profession as a second or third career choice and hence may lack motivation. Concern was also expressed about the quality of education being defined by the needs of the dominant classes and not necessarily those of minorities who suffer from a lack of commitment on the part of educational policy makers. A final topic discussed was how to integrate ICT as a means to improve the quality of education. Teachers can use ICT as a tool in lesson preparation and to increase the effectiveness of locating teaching resources, however, strict attention to policies which provide equal access to technology are indeed needed.

### **Panel Session 2:**

The theme of the second session was “Governance for Quality Education and Roles of International Cooperation.” Dr. Anop Pongwat, Dean of the Faculty of Education at Chiang Mai University, Thailand, served as moderator. Presentations were given from a dual vantage point with representation by an international organization as well as specific experts reporting on the local situation in Uganda and Malawi.

Dr. Mark Bray, Director of the International Institute for Educational Planning, UNESCO, began the presentations by stressing the need to look across countries and find lessons that can benefit all members of the education community. UNESCO’s global monitoring report specifically outlines ways in which good governance has resulted in increases in educational quality. He stressed that while educators are likely to insist that education should be protected in a financial crisis, the message needs to be carried forward to others who can advocate within governments that the quality of education requires attention. In order to address issues of corruption, one role of international cooperation is to examine how to work with the state and strengthen it by looking at governance and how to do things well.

Mr. Albert Byamugisha, Assistant Commissioner of the Ministry of Education and Sports, Uganda, focused his presentation on quality of primary education in Uganda as it has the largest share of the education sector budget at 60%. Recent reforms in the governance of primary education included the adoption of a decentralization policy with a sector-wide approach, restructuring of the Ministry of Education and Sports, and the formation of education and school management committees at the district level. He stated that the institutionalization of a sector-wide approach process has indeed improved education service delivery. Furthermore, he concluded that partnership and cooperation arrangements between the Government of Uganda and the funding agencies have also been strengthened.

Dr. Joseph Chimombo, Director of the Centre for Educational Research & Training, University of Malawi, began by saying that governance cannot be addressed separately from decentralization especially given the vast changes occurring in most African countries. The current status of primary schools in Malawi is that they are faced with critical problems and the system is not delivering a quality education or providing for the poor. The provision of genuine decentralization could empower and equip these schools so that they can function and meet the needs of the students. In conclusion, he asked for policies that recognize the diversity in the context of policy change for different countries and provide the

financial resources necessary to ensure that such policies succeed.

Following these presentations, there were many questions and comments from the floor. Active discussion ensued on the balance between decentralization and centralization, as well as what is meant by genuine decentralization. The need for balance was also emphasized especially in regards to political leadership and management. Further questions were asked about the effect of globalization and if it will result in an alternative model of schooling. Although the questions asked were difficult to answer, consensus among the panel appeared optimistic in that good governance does relate to quality in education and as we learn from each other, progress will continue to be made. The frank and open discussion at JEF VI served as an opportunity for all to take the discussion one step further in that direction.

