

# **Executive Summary of The Japan Education Forum VII (JEF-VII)**

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

### **Outline of the Forum**

Japan strongly acknowledges that for all people and all countries around the world, education is the foundation of self-reliant nation-building and development, and contributes to realize human security. As such, Japan has been reinforcing its international cooperation for education development in developing countries through various means including Official Development Assistance (ODA), based on the “Basic Education for Growth Initiative (BEGIN)” since its announcement in 2002. The endeavor of international cooperation in education places a high priority on achieving Education for All (EFA) by 2015. The target year is now only five years away and many difficult challenges remain to be addressed. This was the topic for the 7th Japan Education Forum (JEF), an annual international forum established in March 2004 through government and academic collaboration as part of Japan’s educational cooperation. The purpose of the forum is to provide an opportunity for open and frank exchange of opinions and ideas among officials in the public sector, practitioners of international development, NGOs, scholars and the general public. The forum is jointly organized by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), Hiroshima University and the University of Tsukuba. This year the event was co-sponsored by the United Nations University and supported by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

This year’s JEFVII was held in Tokyo on February 3, 2010, focusing on which challenges should be given primary focus during the last five years toward 2015 in order to achieve the goals of EFA. In the morning a special lecture was given by Former Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Dr. Koïchiro Matsuura, followed by a keynote speech from Dr. Fay King Chung, Former Minister of Education, Sports and Culture of Zimbabwe. Two afternoon panel sessions presented multiple viewpoints on “Five years left until 2015—What should be our priority?” and “Educational challenges of the post 2015—What does a vision for the near future tell us?” including opportunities for discussion between the attendees and speakers. A total of about 180 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.

### **Keynote Speech by Dr. Koïchiro Matsuura Former Director-General, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)**

In his special lecture entitled “Educational Development and International Cooperation toward 2015 and Beyond” Dr. Matsuura provided the audience with his vision for the future incorporating his experiences during a six-year term as Director-General of UNESCO. Dr. Matsuura stressed that education is not only a universal human right, but one of the keys to poverty reduction, shared prosperity, and a more equitable pattern of globalization. Investment in education should be 10% of the national budget however this figure remains unattainable for many developing countries. It is imperative to realize that investment in education does not provide an immediate pay-off but in the long run education will certainly reap results. Thus 2010 is a critical year in which we must act with resolve, commitment and a renewed sense of urgency as many of the world’s poorest countries confront both the aftermath of the financial crisis and face a continuing food security crisis. In order to reach the 2015 goals, we must 1) strengthen the national commitment to equity and 2) renew the aid effort. Attention should also be given to items not stated as goals but equally essential such as literacy campaigns. In conclusion, Dr. Matsuura expressed concern at the major reduction in ODA budgets in 2007 as investing in education is actually a very efficient form of investment even though the results cannot be seen overnight.

We need to reinvigorate our global contract on education so that it delivers what it once promised.

### **Keynote Speech by Dr. Fay King Chung, Former Minister of Education, Sports and Culture of Zimbabwe**

Dr. Fay King Chung praised Japan for its comprehensive definition of human security including education as one of the most important instruments for developing human potential. She pointed out that during the Meiji Era Japan allocated 33% of its budget for education and currently some Sub-Saharan African countries only allocate 4%. For poverty reduction to occur, these countries must support more than primary education. Research has shown that countries that manage to have modern development generally have more than 20% of their population receiving secondary education. Dr. Fay King Chung outlined her recommendations for the future centering on the following: 1) access, 2) quality and relevance, 3) a multi-sectoral approach, 4) personal and community values, 5) conflict resolution and 6) private public partnerships. In conclusion she stated that education in Africa needs to link very local needs to international and global requirements. Many African countries are still locked into the education and economic systems they inherited from their colonizers and these systems are often not suited to the development agenda. Many Asian countries, especially Japan, have moved away from colonial models towards more modern models which include industrialization. The Japanese model has served Asia well and some of the paths taken by Japan are also relevant to African countries so it is important to be able to distil these important lessons and make adaptations to suit the different conditions that exist in Africa.

### **Panel Sessions**

Two panel sessions were held in the afternoon to provide attendees with multiple viewpoints on the priorities for the near future as well as to examine educational challenges post 2015. 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 “Five Years Left until 2015—What Should be our Priority?” Dr. Prasad Sethunga, Head, Department of Education, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka served as moderator, and experts from Ghana, Scotland, JICA, and the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) gave panel presentations during the session.

Dr. Prasad Sethunga began the session with a presentation that outlined the eight policy statements and proposed action plans of the Sri Lankan Government to be implemented by 2015. Sri Lanka has been identified as an early achiever on track to reach the targets for primary school enrolment however Dr. Sethunga stressed the need to ensure that the focus should not only be on the target being met but also the provision of quality primary education. To meet that need, he concluded with suggestions and recommendations focusing on quality primary education for all by 2015. These included, raising awareness among stakeholders, working out national level mechanisms and reducing the gap between policy (curriculum) and practice.

Mr. Charles Aheto-Tsegah, Director, Planning, Budgeting, Monitoring & Evaluation Division of the Ministry of Education, Ghana, addressed the issue of what priorities should drive efforts in achieving results in the remaining years to 2015 by placing global education development frameworks within their historical perspectives. He posed the following questions: 1) Did we evaluate Jomtien and 2) What are the lessons learnt in access? Based on this discussion, he concluded that over the next five years education performance must measure the number of out-of-school children and its reduction, schools with children enrolled in early childhood institutions, and schools conducting school performance appraisal meetings.

Dr. Divya Jindal-Snape, from the School of Education, Social Work and Community Education, University of Dundee, Scotland, stressed that regardless of whether a country is seen as developed or developing, education for all is an important target. She emphasized that despite discrepancies in the specific nature of the problems being faced, solutions might be the same. Thus the most important pre-requisite for success is that all countries work together and learn from each other. To illustrate her point, she spoke on international educational assistance in the form of knowledge exchange as well as in the form of resources. School retention is a problem faced by many countries for a myriad of reasons; however, creating a motivating learning environment with the involvement of parents can be a shared solution.

Mr. Hideo Eguchi, Deputy Director General, Human Development Department, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), introduced JICA's activities to continue support for countries in achieving universal primary education. This is accomplished through expanding educational opportunities, providing high quality education, and improving education management. JICA's operating principles call for enhancing two-way dialogue between policy and schools; strategic use of schemes; and promotion of regional and inter-regional education networks. As the scientific and creative thinking acquired from mathematics and science education contributes to socio-economic development, JICA puts particular stress on these areas for teacher education and training.

Ms. Carolyn Rodriguez, Head, Knowledge Management Office, Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization – Regional Center for Educational Innovation and Technology (SEAMEO INNOTECH) concluded the panel with the Philippine Scenario towards achieving EFA goals by 2015. After reporting the current data, she examined the critical tasks at hand set by the country's National EFA Committee. Six of these tasks focus on production and the remaining three will be necessary to sustain effective implementation of the production tasks. She concluded that definite steps to bring the Philippines closer to the targeted goals must involve combined efforts from national leaders, professional educators, articulate leaders in society, community leaders and education reform advocates.

There were various questions and comments from the floor regarding the presentations. The topics were wide-ranging beginning with the necessity for inclusive education by mainstreaming students with special needs. This added burden for teachers brought up further concerns as to the working conditions for teachers and how to create the best school environment for them as well as the students. One possible idea suggested would be collaboration between a government agency such as JICA and NGOs working in that area. A final topic brought up for discussion was the potential role self-esteem plays in school retention.

### **Panel Session 2:**

The theme of the second session was "Educational Challenges of the Post 2015—What does a Vision for the Near Future Tell Us?" Prof. Akira Ninomiya, Director, Hiroshima Study Center, the Open University of Japan served as moderator. Presentations were given by educational experts representing New Zealand, Mexico, Malaysia, and Burkina Faso.

Dr. Carol Mutch, Senior Advisor to the Chief Review Officer, Education Review Office, Government of New Zealand, began the presentations by introducing a conceptual framework combining two continuums: 1) the degree to which a country is inward-outward facing and 2) the degree of control versus autonomy. She went on to illustrate that by plotting the tension between these two lines, four quadrants are produced and each of these can provide a scenario for schooling in the future. By mapping current education systems in this way, educational policymakers and planners are better able to make sound choices knowing the direction in which they are headed or aspire to go. Dr. Mutch concluded that while the model has yet to be fully tested empirically it does provide a reference point for beginning a discussion of various education systems.

Dr. Sylvia Schmelkes, Head, Institute for Research on Development of Education, Universidad Iberoamericana,

Mexico, focused her presentation on the main issues of equity and educational content. She defined equity as the distribution of quality education and introduced the challenges facing Mexico in regards to the challenge of providing relevant education in a multicultural world. To resolve problems concerning content, Dr. Schmelkes emphasized the need to rethink the balance between knowledge, skills, and values. She concluded by saying that artistic education should be given greater importance as well as the development of higher order thinking skills, including the ability to access and discriminate information and to learn and discover knowledge.

Dr. Abdul Rashid Mohamed, Dean, School of Educational Studies, Universiti Sains Malaysia presented a case study of Malaysia in order to address the educational challenges of post 2015. He pointed out that twenty years ago, the Internet forever transformed knowledge and yet educators even today are hesitant to transform their curriculums to focus on innovation through calculated risk taking. The question educators must confront is “Are we ready to transform!?” Professionals need to involve all stakeholders to keep the curriculum fluid and dynamic to respond to the changes and demands of future market places. However, it is paramount that throughout this transformation of education, values and moral considerations cannot be compromised.

Dr. Pierre Kouraogo, Associate Professor, Department of Anglophone Studies and Department of Translation and Interpretation l’UFR/LAC - University of Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso concluded the panel presentations by examining what a vision for the near future tells us about EFA in Sub-Saharan African countries. He began with stark realities and statistics which were then followed by challenges countries will continue to face post 2015. These are how to reduce disparities and inequities, how to prepare children to cope with an uncertain future and the need to look inward to find endogenous solutions to local problems. He concluded by saying this must correspond with looking outwards to keep abreast of required skills for survival in the global village.

Following these presentations, Prof. Ninomiya asked the audience participants to share their scenarios for future schooling. Various scenarios were presented from maintaining the status quo to community building centering on parental involvement as the bridge between the school and society. The session concluded with a discussion of the JEFVII theme, collaboration toward greater autonomy, and asked if this did not call for collaboration among states or different systems in the future in place of scenarios working only within national systems.

Prof. Kazuhiro Yoshida, Hiroshima University, then invited the keynote speaker and both panel session moderators to briefly summarize their viewpoints and conduct an interactive discussion with the audience to conclude the day’s activities. The frank and open discussion at JEF VII served as an opportunity for all participants to examine where we stand in relation to the goals set for 2015, the challenges that remain to be addressed post 2015, and propose future scenarios for collaboration toward educational development for all.