

[Special Lecture]

**“Educational Development and
International Cooperation Toward 2015 and Beyond”**



Koïchiro Matsuura

Former Director-General, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Koïhiro Matsuura was appointed by the Organization's General Conference on November 12 1999 to serve a six-year term as Director-General of UNESCO (1999-2009). Mr. Matsuura, born in Tokyo in 1937, served as Ambassador of Japan to France from 1994 to 1999. He was educated at the Law Faculty of the University of Tokyo and at the Faculty of Economics of Haverford College (Pennsylvania, U.S.A.) and began his diplomatic career in 1959. Posts held by Mr. Matsuura include those of Director-General of the Economic Co-operation Bureau of Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1988); Director-General of the North American Affairs Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1990); Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs. He also served as the Chairperson of UNESCO's World Heritage Committee for one year, until November 1999. He has been awarded honorary doctorates from more than 40 universities including University of Lyon in France, Moscow State University in Russia, Haverford College in the United States, and Kyung Hee University in South Korea. He has also received about 60 medals including the Russia's Medal of Friendship and the title of Grand Officer of France's Ordre National de la Leion d'Honneur (the National Order of the Legion of Honor).

‘Educational Development and International Cooperation Toward 2015 and Beyond’

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- **2010 is a critical year for achieving the Education for All goals and the Millennium Development Goals.** We have made important progress in many areas, but we are not on track to fulfill our collective commitments. As many of the world’s poorest countries grapple with the aftershock of the financial crisis and with a food security crisis, there is now a real danger that progress will slow. Looking towards 2015, the goals are still attainable – but we need to act with resolve, commitment and a renewed sense of urgency.
- **The new edition of UNESCO’s flagship Education for All ‘Global Monitoring Report’ provides compelling evidence of the case for urgent action.** As the report documents, there has been encouraging progress on many fronts, especially in the world’s poorest countries. Since 1999, out of school numbers have fallen by some 33 million. Yet the hard truth is that we are not on track for delivering on the promise of a quality basic education for all children. In today’s increasingly knowledge-based global economy, 72 million children are still out of school. On current trends, there will still be 50 million children out of school by 2015. Many millions more drop-out before completing primary education. And all too often those in school are receiving an education of low quality. Changing this picture is an imperative because basic education is not just a universal human right, but one of the keys to poverty reduction, shared prosperity, and a more equitable pattern of globalization.
- **How do we get the world on track to deliver on the promise of education for all by 2015?** The UNESCO report identifies two priorities for action. **First, strengthening the national commitment to equity.** All countries need to strengthen their efforts to reach those who are being left behind. All too often, governments are delivering good quality education for some while failing to provide for poor, socially marginalized children. Ensuring that the most vulnerable and marginalized children are enrolled in school, that they progress through school, and that they get opportunities to develop their potential requires targeted programmes and interventions that seek to overcome the disadvantages that they face. These programmes and interventions need to break the cycles of deprivation fuelled by poverty, gender inequalities and other markers for disadvantage. **Second, renewing the aid compact.** We urgently need a scaled-up and more effective aid effort. There is no substitute for effective action by national governments. Developing countries must sustain and increase political and financial support to education. However, aid donors also have responsibilities. The UNESCO Education for All ‘Global Monitoring Report’ estimates that, even with a strengthened national effort, the financing gap for achieving basic education goals is around \$16bn. Donors must step up their efforts to meet their aid commitments. We also need to explore the scope for an expanded role for innovative financing initiatives, which have delivered major benefits in the area of health but have not been sufficiently exploited for education.

Facts from the Report

Progress towards the goals

- Some of the world’s poorest countries have registered rapid advances in enrolment, completion and transition to

secondary school. Benin for example started out in 1999 with one of the world's lowest net enrolment ratios and may now be on track to achieve UPE by 2015.

- Since 1999, the number of children out of school has dropped by 33 million worldwide. Progress has been significantly faster than in the 1990s. Since 1999, and during a period in which the size of its school age population increased by 20 million, sub-Saharan Africa reduced its out-of-school population by almost 13 million, or 28%. Had the region progressed at the same pace as in the 1990s, 18 million more children would be out of school.
- Falling gender disparities have helped to drive these advances in many countries. The share of girls out of school has declined from 58% to 54% since 1999.
- Yet, there are over 72 million primary school age children out of school. Around 54% are girls. And on current trends we will miss the 2015 universal primary education target by 56 million children.
- Retention and smooth progression through primary school followed by transition to lower secondary is another priority area. Far too many children enter primary school only to drop out before completion. In half of the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia, almost one in three children entering primary school drop out before completion.
- Far too many children in developing countries – around one in three- are entering school having experienced chronic malnutrition. Countless studies have documented the simple fact that temporary malnutrition produces permanent disadvantages in learning. And all too often, the disadvantage starts in the womb, with mothers experiencing extreme micronutrient deficiencies. That is why we need to start linking the education for all agenda with bold reforms in child and maternal health provision.
- Learning achievement levels in many countries point to poor quality provision. Too many children are leaving school without having gained basic literacy skills, let alone the problem solving capabilities they need to succeed in employment markets. In some countries in sub-Saharan Africa, young adults with five years of education have a 40 % probability of being illiterate.
- Changing this picture requires action at many levels. Curriculum development, child-centred learning, textbook provision and investment in school infrastructure all have a role to play. But the key missing ingredient in terms of the 2015 targets is an additional 1.2 million additional teachers required annually to 2015.
- Between 1985-1994 and 2000-2007, the adult literacy rate increased by 10 percent to its current level of 84 percent.
- Yet, an estimated 759 million adults still lack literacy skills. Two-thirds are women. Numbers are coming down far too slowly and there is now little prospect of achieving the goal of a 50% reduction in illiteracy agreed at Dakar. The reason: governments are failing to prioritize literacy in national education and wider poverty reduction strategies.
- The scale of education deprivation and the inequalities documented in the report for many countries is truly shocking. It is indefensible that, for so many children, being born into a poor household, into an ethnic or linguistic minority family, or as a girl is so often a one-way taken to restricted opportunity in education. Unless we face up to the challenge of overcoming extreme inequality in education the promises made at Dakar will be broken. Reaching the marginalized is a condition for accelerated progress towards the goals.

Impact of the financial crisis on education

- An estimated 125 million additional people could be pushed into malnutrition in 2009 and 90 million into poverty in 2010.
- National budgets of poor countries are under pressure. Sub-Saharan Africa faces a potential loss of around \$4.6 billion annually in financing for education in 2009 and 2010, equivalent to a 10 % reduction in spending per

primary-school pupil.

Education financing

- National leadership is key. Governments need to increase investment in basic education and move towards the benchmarks of 6 percent of GDP and 20 percent of the national government budget.
- However, even with increased domestic resource mobilization there will be a global EFA financing gap of \$16bn annually to 2015. Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for around two-thirds of the global financing gap, or \$11 billion.
- With current aid to these countries running at less than \$3bn – closing the gap is an urgent priority. This may seem a huge challenge but the \$16 billion financing gap is just 2 percent of the bailout for banks in the UK and USA during the recent crisis.
- Recent history is not encouraging. It is a matter of grave concern that aid commitments to basic education fell in 2007 (by 22% to \$4.3 billion) – and fiscal pressures in many donor countries threaten to make a bad situation considerably worse. With many low-income countries facing acute budget pressures, there is a pressing need for increased concessional aid. At the very least donors have to live up to the commitments made at Gleneagles and other meetings in 2005 to increase aid by \$50bn to 2010.
- But there are limits to what can be achieved through aid programmes. Fortunately, there are alternatives. Innovative financing offers a potentially sustainable route for closing the education for all financing gap. The proposed ‘Better Future’ levy on the commercial and marketing revenues of the five major European soccer leagues is one example. On a somewhat larger scale, a small levy – a ‘Tobin tax’ – on financial transactions could create a future revenue stream to close the education for all financing gap.
- Looking beyond financing, we need a more effective multilateral aid architecture. There is a sense in which the education sector has to ‘catch-up’ with the health sector, where global initiatives have helped to galvanize political action, foster partnerships between donors, aid recipients, non-government organizations and philanthropic foundations.
- We have to face up to the fact that education has lacked the high-level leadership and delivery mechanisms needed to deliver results. That is why I welcome the open and constructive debate over the future of the Fast Track Initiative. We need to use that debate to raise our level of ambition and reinvigorate a global compact on education that has delivered less than it once promised.



[Questions and Answers with Special Lecturer]

Discussant

Prof. Olive M. Mugenda, Vice Chancellor of the Kenyatta University

Thank you very much for this opportunity to make a few remarks in response to Mr. Matsuura's lecture. I would like to fully agree with what has been said but to add one or two additional things that are important to emphasize. I would like to give as an example, Kenya, where the government has free primary education. Even though schools are now free in regards to the elimination of school fees, which has been very instrumental in increasing access, there are other added expenses especially in schools where it is required to wear a uniform and children do not have enough money for lunch and go hungry. So it is not only fees that are involved but rather other issues as well. One issue which we cannot avoid is child labor where a lot of children even though there are no school fees are not in school because they are working on farms. There is also the question of governance among high level leadership. If donors give money and it is not used properly then this money is being withheld from the rightful recipients. Therefore, what I would like to say is that governments must improve the infrastructure for providing free primary education because if this is not done, the strategy will not work. There is also the issue of teachers as so many children are now enrolling due to the free primary education that there are not enough teachers so this does not help the strategy to succeed. Governments need to prepare more teachers.

And lastly, the whole issue of return on investment as has been said. It is so important that very clearly governments need to inform people of the benefits of education and that they will not be immediate but we need to see the long term effect. We must work together with parents who just don't believe in education and other practices that are retarding the attainment of these goals. But I think we can achieve our goals if we set targets and ensure that the people who are implementing these strategies have performance based contracts and in this way the targets can be set with baseline data requirements. As you have pointed out, when we have data to compare with than it is possible to monitor and measure how targets are being met.

We will now open the floor for questions.

Question 1

Fujimoto, Tamako (Aichi-ken, Japan)

Thank you very much for this valuable talk. I have one question about the quality of education and how to improve the quality of education. I am engaged in secondary education in Malawi and the target for students there is to take the national test which in reality is a UK test. To pass this national test leads to a professional life. But I wonder if this is really quality education? Could you give me a specific response as to what kind of data would be required to accurately assess quality?

Question 2

Peter Anlijah (Hiroshima University, Japan)

Thank you very much for this opportunity to ask a question. I am a student at Hiroshima University. I especially appreciated your excellent remark that it is the effort of the whole world to ensure that children are in school. In an attempt to do that, I would like to share the scenario where you put people into the school and there is an open window from which people filter out. What I would like to ask is how can we block that window? The window I am referring to is when we enroll 10M students and only graduate 8M then I think we must ask, where did that 2M go? We must find a way to close that window.

Koichiro Matsuura (Former Director-General, UNESCO)

Please allow me to answer these questions in English. Many of the points you have raised are interrelated. One of the important points that I have not touched on is cultural background which ought to be respected in the process of educating young people. As pointed out by Prof. Olive M. Mugenda, UNESCO does not advocate any form of standardized education for all countries. We always argue that cultural backgrounds must be fully taken into account in developing curriculum, textbooks and providing teacher training. For children this is a very important point and one that is also related to the 2nd and 3rd points raised. I am astounded to hear that in some African countries they still use school textbooks prepared by the British who must have ruled in those countries many, many years ago. That is a very surprising point for me but I fail to understand why the governments concerned have not taking the necessary steps to produce new textbooks reflecting their new education policies. This background is essential and that is why I stressed in my presentation how important it is to develop effective curriculum and textbooks. UNESCO was asked to prepare on very short notice, textbooks for the Iraqi people after the Saddam Hussein regime fell as during his regime all the textbooks prepared by the then government were full of admiration for Saddam Hussein and thus were no longer acceptable. So they had to revise and prepare new textbooks reflecting new realities and we stepped in and prepared high quality textbooks. I state once again it is crucial for a new curriculum to reflect the new realities in these countries. UNESCO is ready to help. We do have an institute, in fact 6 education institutes including as the sixth the Institute for Statistics in Montreal, Canada. One of these is the International Bureau of Education in Geneva which is responsible for helping developing countries with curriculum development and creating textbooks.

Then I would like to come to the question of dropouts. This is a very, very serious problem. That is why I said in my presentation it is not enough to count children who enter school but they must complete 5-6 years and this brings us to the question of dropouts. An assessment of the situation in the Global Monitoring Report is one of the major tasks of countries concerned and governments are trying to reduce and eliminate dropouts. We have to analyze why we have so many dropouts. Some leave school because their parents will not allow them to go and they are forced into child labor earning only a little bit. In particular many parents force their girls to work at home. Mothers feel they need to have help from their daughters. This is the kind of attitude parents and in particular mothers have to change. That is why I stress the importance of educating parents, especially mothers. Illiterate mothers will not understand the importance of school. Of course we cannot wait until all mothers become literate but must stress to mothers who are not educated and thus illiterate, that they fail to understand the importance of educating girls. Poverty is another major reason and I said that I am very happy that the number two millennium development goal is for universal primary education as this is crucial for eliminating poverty. These two issues are related as in the chicken and the egg scenario. Unless we eliminate poverty we can't have universal primary education (UPE) and unless we have UPE we can't eliminate poverty. They have to go hand in hand and one cannot possibly answer which must come first. Both must advance at the same time.

As for one of the points raised by Prof. Olive Mugenda, governance, it is very important particularly for ODA to developing countries. Good governance is the key word in this context, of course globally, but in particular in education and aid given to the government must be properly used. In order to fulfill initial objectives there, governance is crucial and we cannot give to governments whose behavior is not reliable as is the responsibility of governments. I hope I have covered many of the important points that have been raised. The Global Monitoring Report issued by UNESCO can be accessed from the website and you can download the report there. Thank you very much.