[Questions and Answer Session with Speakers]

Riho Sakurai (Associate Professor, Center for the Study of International Cooperation in Education (CICE), Hiroshima University)

Thank you. Now we would like to invite the two keynote speakers back on stage to have a question-and-answer session until noon. In order to take questions from as many participants as possible, I'd like to ask you to limit your questions to two. As time is limited, please also make your questions concise. When you are handed the microphone, please give your name and your organization, if you belong to one.

Question1

Minoru Takeshita (Gifu University)

Thank you for your very informative lectures. I was surprised to hear that education is provided in children's mother tongues in Ethiopia, where there are more than 90 ethnic groups. It's so impressive. In Gifu Prefecture, there were 43,000 foreign residents as of June 2014, including those from China, Brazil and the Philippines. Many of the parents live on welfare. The ratio of those who live on welfare in Japan increased rapidly after the collapse of Lehman Brothers. Since then, the rate has remained high. There is also the issue of out-of-school children. In fact, those in the first and the second grades cannot answer questions in Japanese. This issue is called "double limited," meaning they cannot speak either their mother language or Japanese adequately. If they continue to live in Japan, studying in the Japanese language will help them find employment in the future. I would like to ask both of you what you think about this issue.

Question 2

Mokhlesur Rahman (Association for Shaking Hands with Bangladeshis)

I was born in Bangladesh and have lived in Japan for many years. I am engaged in various activities to promote international cooperation, particularly in the field of school education. During the last 15 years, the activities to achieve the goals of EFA and the MDGs have mainly sought quantitative improvement of education. Now qualitative improvement is called for, but there has not been much explanation of what exactly is called for when we talk about qualitative improvement. People just say "quality education" must be guaranteed. I believe curriculum development is needed to improve the quality of education. Among the many issues in different regions of the world, I am particularly interested in issues concerning ISIS and other issues of terrorism in the world. I wonder if these issues are closely related to the quality of education. What matters is not just whether children have access to education but what kind of education they receive. We must consider how we can control terrorism by promoting quality education. I would like to ask both of you about this matter.

Eshetu Asfaw (Director, Plan and Resources Mobilization Directorate, Ministry of Education, Ethiopia)

I will just raise some points on the first question. It is really very important for the children to learn in their mother tongues. In Ethiopia, 20 years ago all children were learning in only one language, the national language. The assessment during that time showed that children's access to school was very limited, and those who came to school dropped out early because of the problem they had with the language. We found that students' learning improved after we began providing education in their mother tongues. More children are now at school. In fact, we still have a problem with limited access. But those who come to school are retained because of the change in the language. It's not only my belief but all educators believe that children should learn in their mother tongues. Otherwise it's difficult for them just to understand what the teacher is talking about in the classroom. I believe so. I don't know how I am going to answer your question, but primary education is particularly important for children.

So they have to learn in their mother tongues. Primary education is the foundation of their education. This opportunity should be given to all citizens. It's not a matter of the number. Even if it is only one child, it is the right of the child to learn in the mother tongue. This is what I can say on the first question.

Aaron Benavot (Director, EFA Global Monitoring Report, UNESCO)

I would like to thank the questioners for their questions. Let me begin with the first question. First of all, this is a good example of an educational issue that cuts across many countries, both countries in the global North and the global South: the issue of national education systems providing learning opportunities in languages that are understood by the students who enter the schools is a challenge for many countries including some of the countries in this region. I also know that in South Korea they have many students from immigrant or mixed background parents and they also are struggling with trying to come up with the right kinds of policies to address the needs of the children of mixed marriages. Certainly the United States, Canada and Australia and some other countries have attempted to develop over the years effective bilingual or multilingual policies in terms of language instruction. As my colleague here has indicated, the evidence is very clear that when children learn in their mother tongue, they learn more quickly. Their learning growth curve is much better. Once they have acquired basic knowledge or skills in one language, it's much easier for them to begin learning and developing proficiency in a second language. The GMR report over the years has supported bilingual education and the provision of mother tongue instruction in the early grades with bridging mechanisms that allow children who have been introduced to a mother tongue instruction to then be able to move and learn a regional or international language, let's say beginning in grade 3 or 4. Parenthetically, I would also indicate to you that the evidence from the neurological science community also indicates how important it is for children to develop their capacities for learning in their mother tongue first before they begin to acquire other skills in language and in other subject areas. I think this is a very important thing to keep in mind.

The second question is a more complex question. This is the issue of how do we understand quality when we speak about good quality education, and how is quality being understood in the post 2015 development education priorities. So, let's begin by saying that in the Dakar understanding of quality, quality was seen as a multi-dimensional phenomena that it included the provision of adequate infrastructure—for example, there should be sufficient number of classrooms, and schools, so students do not have to walk 10 kilometers to go to school, there should be adequate sanitary facilities, and all the other kinds of things that would meet the basic health needs of children. So, infrastructure was important. Having well trained and knowledgeable teachers was also an important understanding of quality education. Thirdly, learning outcomes were considered to the extent to which children actually acquire basic skills, basic efficiencies, in the different subject areas. It's important to keep in mind that both the Dakar and the Jomtien conception of quality sees it as a multi-dimensional phenomena including inputs, processes, and outputs or outcomes. And it is my view that the post-2015 development priorities are putting much more emphasis on outcomes when they speak about quality and much less about inputs and process. Most of the targets in the Sustainable Development Goal in Education proposed by the Open Working Group focus on learning outcomes, about quality learning, about skills being acquired. They say very little about other quality dimensions like the enabling conditions for learning, There's one little target about infrastructure but very little about pedagogical processes and so forth. It's important for us to keep in mind that this discourse shift from quantity to quality has also been accompanied by a change in discourse that views quality as multi-dimensional to one in which quality is almost exclusively viewed in terms of learning outcomes. While there are some advantages in this shift, I think there are many risks in narrowly defining quality in terms of learning.

Another point you bring out is also important. Many in the international community today, when they talk about learning, mainly talking about learning in terms of basic skills like literacy and numeracy and skills that are needed for employment. The one target that is of considerable interest to many Japanese colleagues is Target 4.7,

which includes ESD, Education for Sustainable Development. This target talks about ensuring all learners acquiring knowledge, attitudes and skills that promote sustainable development including among others through education for sustainable development, sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace, non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development. How do you measure that target? Certainly not an easy task.

This is the one post 2015 target that is so critical to the point that you're making. This target highlights learning not just in terms of literacy and numeracy and labor market skills, but in relation to other aspects of the curriculum that seek to develop the mind, the consciousness, the awareness, the moral attitudes of children. In this sense it is an enormously important target, which may be contested in New York in September. Unclear whether or not it will remain among the education targets. I hope it does but it will probably be one of the targets that will be the focus of a lot of debate among member states. So, keep in mind that many people who talk about learning tend to think about learning in rather narrow terms and not in the terms that are being mentioned in this Target 4.7 that looks at sustainable development in terms of attitudes, world views, lifestyles, appreciation, for cultural diversity, and many other things beyond just literacy and numeracy.

Question 3

Kazu Oda (Study Group on Education Act)

My field of study includes moral education and educational administration. I would like to ask Mr. Eshetu two questions. The first question is on accountability. In the summary of your presentation, you wrote under No. 2 'Increased decentralisation', "...with service providers strictly accountable to local governments for producing results." How do you evaluate the results? In Japan, for example, academic achievement tests are conducted. There are local governments that evaluate teachers, too. People have different opinions about what they think are good results, but I hear that some local governments cut salaries if teachers cannot produce satisfactory results. I would like to know what you do in your country to evaluate the outcome.

My second question is about the phrase right above it saying: "It allows for more effective responses to local needs and stronger citizen voice." I think this is very important, but there are politically controversial issues. In Japan, there seems to be a move to teach nationalism in moral education, starting from the first grade. While there are citizens who are against it, the government wants to promote it. The government wants to promote militaristic policies, but there are citizens who would not like such policies. In Japan, things tend to move in the direction of what the government wants. I would like to know how you are reflecting citizens' voices on education.

Question 4

Daul Shiga (Minsai Center (Education for Development Foundation Japan)

I'm working in an NGO which does education support in Southeast Asia. Because of the nature of my work, I usually check the materials reported by the government. I always notice that the number in terms of the enrollment or dropout, the completion rates, they are actually quite exaggerated compared to what I noticed in schools. So, I assume that there's some kind of pressure to increase these numbers. I would like to ask this question. Is this kind of tendency noticed when you gather all these numbers? And I also want to ask the question that when you gather numbers from each country, do you just use the number reported by the country or do you actually pay effort to make the numbers closer to the reality? Thank you.

Eshetu Asfaw (Director, Plan and Resources Mobilization Directorate, Ministry of Education, Ethiopia)

Shall I start from the last question regarding the data? In Ethiopia, we have of course a problem with the quality of data. In some regions and even in the cities, most of the time they send highly inflated figures to the center and the government. Because plans are made based on the data, unless we have quality data, it is difficult to plan.

The government is now very much committed to getting quality data. So we have established a department for this purpose at the administrative level which is responsible for collecting data on education. We have also established a similar department at the regional level because, as I said, it depends on the federal state, and education is more decentralized now. This means there are similar departments at both the federal and regional levels. Data is now sent right from schools to Woreda, the smallest administrative unit, then to the region and to the federal state. We introduced this system so as to at least improve the information. At first, about five or six years ago, there were a lot of inflated figures which said almost all children were in school. This was so striking that the government decided to check all these figures. We sent a group of experts from the federal government to the Woreda to study this, and then we found that these figures were exaggerated. After that, we revised the system to improve the quality of data. There are problems but we have to address these problems. Now we have data that mostly reflect the reality. I don't think Ethiopia is the only country that has this problem. I think most countries have similar problems. The problem is not as bad now in Ethiopia.

Now I'd like to answer the first question on how you evaluate the outcome of the students' learning. We have cycle examinations, at the national and regional levels. The regional examination is given upon completion of primary school. In Ethiopia, primary school is for eight years, so we have a regional examination when students complete eight years of primary school. At the end of the general education of 10 years, we have a national examination. We also have another examination for placement. It's an examination to see if students can go on to higher education. This is conducted at the end of 12 years of education. We also have a national assessment test in grade 4. There is also a regional test to assess students' learning. These are used for allocating budget. Those who have improved the students' learning get more money. I mean it's "result-based aid," a type of prize to motivate regions. Donors have contributed greatly in this area, particularly, DFID from Great Britain. This is how we evaluate children's learning at the regional as well as at the federal level.

Aaron Benavot (Director, EFA Global Monitoring Report, UNESCO)

I just have a few minutes and the questions could take a long time to answer. Let me say very briefly, with respect to the second question around data. The EFA Global Monitoring Report does not collect data on its own. Almost all of the administrative data about education in the world is collected by UNESCO's Institute for Statistics in Montreal. They have an elaborate quality assurance process in which they very carefully go through the data being supplied by ministries of education around the world. And if there are places in the government responses in which things are exaggerated, then colleagues in Montreal follow a process with their colleagues in the different national systems in the national ministries to assure the country information that is publish. It is this information we receive and we do only a little additional quality assurance with the figures. This refers to the quality of administrative data. One problem and big challenge in the post-2015 era is to go beyond the administrative data on education, which only indicates an overall average about what is happening in a given country. It doesn't show you regional disparities as we heard about in Ethiopia, disparities between rich children and poor children, between children from different ethnic groups or language groups and so on. So, we need to have ways to address this challenge; to close the data gap of patterns *within* countries, not between countries. We need to use new kinds of data sources. For this reason the United Nations and others have called for a data revolution. In the future we will likely see the use more household survey data or school survey data that provides information that goes beyond administrative data at the national level, and allows for much closer understanding of differences within countries.

At the GMR we have a whole website, in which we have been compiling data and reporting findings from household survey database. We call this The World Inequality Database on Education (WIDE). You can find a lot of within country information on education from our database. These kinds of data will be increasing in the coming years in addition to data from learning assessments, including regional, international, and national assessments. The post-2015 landscape will be a landscape in which there will be many new streams of data. Not all of it is high quality

but certainly it provides a much more nuanced and variegated picture of the kind of educational challenges the countries find within their borders.

This brings me just to another point and I'll end here. One of the most interesting efforts being made today is to collect data about learning through what are called Citizen-led Assessments by the Pratham Organization, which began in India, spread to Pakistan, Sub-Saharan Africa, and may begin in Mexico soon. These learning assessments collect information at the household level, and are not school-based learning assessments like SACMEQ or PISA. Using a fairly simple instrument, thousands of volunteers collect information about the basic skills in literacy and numeracy that children in the household possess, whether they attend school or not. This data collection process is also a way to empower communities and local citizens so they may have a much bigger say about the education that is being provided to their children and to hold government to account. Then when the government commits to providing quality education, citizens have an opportunity to raise their voices and to begin to articulate a view based on evidence they themselves have collected. In this way they can hold the government to account and ask that different policy options be considered to make the provision of quality education a reality. Such citizen led assessments are very interesting new phenomena that have been spreading over the last 10 years. I would expect it to expand even more rapidly in the coming years. And in many countries governments are working together with the citizen-led assessments in civil society to build on these insights and to develop better and more effective policies.

Riho Sakurai (Associate Professor, Center for the Study of International Cooperation in Education (CICE), Hiroshima University)

Time is up, so we would like to conclude the morning session. The two keynote speakers will join the open-floor discussions following the panel discussion in the afternoon as well as the concluding discussions. If you have additional questions, please ask them during these sessions. Mr. Eshetu and Dr. Benavot, thank you. Please give them a warm round of applause. After the lunch break, the afternoon session will start at 1:30. Please come back about 10 minutes before that time, around 1:20. If you have questions about the lunch venue or other questions, please come to the reception desk. Thank you for your kind cooperation in the morning session, and see you again in the afternoon.