

Concluding Discussion

Riho Sakurai (Associate Professor, CICE, Hiroshima University)

Now we would like to go on to the closing discussion. Please turn your attention once again to the theme of this forum, which is stated on the program: “It will focus on the possible future direction of Japan’s international educational cooperation in order to contribute to the achievement of post-2015 education goals.” In this closing session, I would like to ask the two keynote speakers and the panelists what they found from today’s forum to be important for Japan’s future international education cooperation. As the time is limited, I would like to ask the keynote speakers to speak for four or five minutes and the panelists for three to four minutes each about what they learned today, focusing on the theme of the forum. I’d like to first ask Prof. Imbuga on the far right, then Prof. Muta, Ms. Kayashima, Mr. Ulep, Mr. Shyamal and Prof. Yoshida. Thank you.

Mabel Imbuga (Vice Chancellor, JKUAT, Kenya /Board Chair, RUFORUM Network)

I have three points. The first one is on how Japan can contribute to the next post 2015. First of all, I was very happy to hear that there is recommendation for Japanese universities to open up for interaction with other universities in the world, which, I think, is very important. So that now Japanese universities would be internationalizing and, the other universities would also be doing the same. I think it is very important in terms of student-staff exchanges specially to encourage the interaction between the universities in Japan and universities globally because this is a new area of collaboration. I think it should be encouraged and also expanded.

The second one is on JICA and the government of Japan encouraging regional dynamism. The regional dynamism is now very important and where JICA or the Japanese government can use one center and interact with many other regions. And in this, I’m looking at expanding the networks to provide education globally. At the moment, we are collaborating with about 22 countries which cover more than a half of African countries through ai-Japan program. And if this program is encouraged, all the other countries have an impact from the programs laid down by JICA and the government of Japan. So regional dynamism is very important. And then, I was also happy to learn that the government of Japan is spending more financially on higher education. This is the opposite to what my government is doing. They spend so much on the basic education and secondary education and they miss out universities. So from the Education 2030, this changes. I know they are starting to concentrate also on higher education because higher education is equally as important as I mentioned. For the first time, universities have been mentioned in the SDGs. They were not in the MDGs. So I really appreciate that the roles of universities are being recognized. We should also promote STEM, that is the science, technology, engineering and mathematics. In order for the developing countries to come up, they have to industrialize. And you cannot industrialize if you have not built the capacity in the STEM areas, so those areas are very important to be focus as we go forward.

And the last one. I was happy to learn from Bangladesh that the women actually were passing more than the boys there. This is very encouraging for us. And I would like to know what Bangladesh has done to make their women perform better than their boys because it is something that we have been struggling with in Kenya for a long time. And then, I think we have come up with a slogan in Kenya to say that what men can do, women can do it even better.

So that now, we can encourage more women coming into this program that they fear. For example, in the electrical and electric engineering program, you find only two ladies out of a class of 40. So this is something that we need to focus on as we go ahead with the 2030. Let us focus on the STEM and let us also focus on the gender parity. So that now, we don't leave our women behind. As we move into the 2030, let us also focus on agriculture, agri-business and agricultural mechanization. This is very important because Africa is basically agricultural land. And if you go to farms, you find the women. We want to release the women so that they can do other roles. Not being on the farms with horses digging and planting, but by mechanizing agriculture, we shall be able to release the women. Let us focus on agri-business. Even just small gadgets can take up household activities. Like when the microwave came, it made changes. We can do the same on on-site processing of agricultural products. So that African can now start exporting semi-processed products or fully processed products. I think that will be very important and I know it can be done. We really appreciate JICA on where you are going. You have given us your next five years plan and we are happy and we are going to align ourselves on it. So I would like to take this opportunity to thank the government of Japan in supporting Africa and I'm looking forward to all of you to coming to attend the TICAD VI, which is very important. For the first time, it is going to be held in Africa and where else, but in Kenya because Kenya is the leading partner. You can never go wrong by coming through Kenya to access the rest of Africa. Thank you very much for listening to me.

Hiromitsu Muta (Professor Emeritus, Tokyo Institute of Technology)

May I say something a little different? I am now serving as a policy advisor to Myanmar's Ministry of Education and live in Myanmar for about seven months of every year. There were serious floods in July and August last year, and many schools suffered heavy damage. The Japanese government was to offer 5 billion yen of assistance, mainly to rehabilitate these schools, using various schemes. When I was in Myanmar, at first I heard that JICA was going to build schools using a scheme called "general grant aid." So I met with the Deputy Minister of Education and conveyed the Japanese plan, which he said was not good. He asked me if I knew about Cyclone Nargis. When schools were damaged by this cyclone, Japan provided assistance using general grant aid and built elevated concrete school buildings, which can serve as shelters for local people during cyclones. With general grant aid, beautiful buildings can be built, but it takes time because many procedures are involved. With regard to the reconstruction after Nargis, only half of the schools in the plan were completed. It would have taken two or three years, and they could not wait. They built their schools on their own or with the support of other donors. Of course, the completed buildings were beautiful, but only half of them were built. The deputy minister said that emergency assistance for disasters should produce immediate results. He wanted financial assistance in such a case. I told him that Japan did not provide financial assistance. I promised to convey his message, but I said I didn't think it was easy for Japan to provide financial assistance. I did convey his message, and I don't know what discussion took place in Japan, but in the end, it was decided that JICA's assistance was to be given in the form of financial assistance. I was very glad to hear that. I thought JICA and the Foreign Ministry had changed a lot and become quite flexible. Of course the Ministry of Education was very glad to hear that. The other donors were concerned, wondering if it would work. They wondered if the funds would disappear after JICA provided the financial assistance or if bidding would actually take place or if the procurement of materials would be made based on the procurement documents. In order to implement the financial assistance, JICA dispatched two experts to provide guidance. The construction work is basically conducted by local people, but the experts provided guidance to conduct public bidding and procurement based on international standards. In this way, it was decided that financial assistance would be used to rebuild schools as soon as

possible. I think schools will be built in about a year. If financial assistance is needed again for other purposes, the system is already in place, so I think it will be easier. I don't think financial assistance is always good, but this was a very good example of expanding schemes so that Japan can now use financial assistance as a tool in addition to grant aid, technical cooperation and loans. As there are more schemes, financial assistance can be combined with technical cooperation or other schemes. I wrote about this a little in the evaluation report I mentioned today. Financial assistance tends to be invisible, and there is concern about how the money is used. With regard to the "visibility" of Japan's activities for example, in this case in Myanmar, we can still make it clear to people what Japan is doing. Myanmar builds schools with the financial assistance provided by Japan, but we can make the project "visible" by following the progress and publicizing it in various ways, with regard to how many schools are being built and to what extent, or by asking the completed schools to use logos on the school buildings. We can also ask these schools built with Japanese assistance to conduct many educational projects. Most of our projects being conducted are on developing curricula, so we can ask these schools to use such curricula. Various projects can be conducted at these schools. So, activities can be expanded in many ways. JICA has many tools. I believe education cooperation using various tools can significantly contribute to achieving the goals of the SDGs.

Nobuko Kayashima (Senior Advisor, JICA)

There was a very difficult but interesting question on the factors in the success of the Jomo Kenyatta project. I'd like to mention Mr. Sugiyama. He was an expert who played a very important role in the latter part of the project. After the Jomo Kenyatta project was over, he served as leader of the science and math project in Kenya, too. Around that time, I worked with him a few times. When Phase II of the science and math project was over, he insisted that we should end the project then. Project leaders usually do not insist that the project should be ended. We were afraid that if the project ended then, the activities that had been undertaken, namely the teacher training which had finally begun at the nationwide level, might stop. We were afraid that the activities would be discontinued, so we insisted that the project be continued, but he disagreed with us and insisted that it be ended. He said if the project's activities were to stop then, it was important to let them stop. He said the project would become truly successful if the partners could stand on their own and continue it. This is just one episode, but I came to think about, for example, JICA's reports, which often state what was done and how much was done. JICA's policy position papers and the MOFA's policy papers also state what will be done and how much will be done. The Global Monitoring Reports also say how much money will be raised and put in developing countries. Now I sometimes wonder if this is enough. I think it is actually important to also consider what we didn't do and where the projects were handed over to developing countries. The donors have to say that they will do this much and have done this much, but I think it is also important for them to believe in the ability of people in developing countries to take action. It is important to wait for them to stand on their own, to believe in them and wait. Even if they fail, we must wait and develop projects, providing only what is needed. This is my personal opinion based on my personal experience. Some countries have grown, and we can now discuss various issues with them. This is what I feel based on my on-site experience.

Soledad A. Ulep (Director, UP NISMED)

The fact remains that in order to have quality education, teacher competence needs to be continuously enhanced. Teacher training programs are necessary and important but they are not

sufficient. So I think a great contribution of Japan can be to continue disseminating lesson study because lesson study can complement the teacher training programs that are being provided and to do more research related to lesson study. And then, once these are done, probably, we can answer one of the issues that was raised by Yoshida sensei regarding the need to explore how much we know about how to improve learning. I think we can gather a lot of substantial data from doing lesson study.

Shyamal Kanti Ghosh (Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Government of Bangladesh)

Thank you. About quality education, first what we mean by the term quality education, how we could achieve quality in education, what we need to do for quality education, is it only curriculum, textbooks, teachers, environment, equipment, management, technical know-how, school factor? There are so many things to consider. Government of Japan is helping Bangladesh through JICA to improve the quality of education in Bangladesh. They are working for curriculum development as well as teacher's development. No doubt it is the vital area for quality, it will be better if it enhanced more in the future. Educational experts and managers are getting scholarship from Japan and they earning degrees and diploma from renowned institutions of Japan. It is no-doubt, but we need more experts, we have more than 20 million children up-to grade 5 primary. Expenses of 2 year-degree program cost nearly 10 million yen. If there is shortage of fund, JICA can consider of sending expert to Bangladesh for 2, 3 months, they can train the trainers, instead of 2 year-degree program. We appreciate if they could conduct both.

Other thing is that, I don't have much knowledge about educational condition of Japan 50 years ago, but our education is based on rote learning. We write on an exam paper and pass the exam. How it could work in our life, we have no idea. Now we are thinking about how the learning can affect the life of the learners and how it could be useful. Experts should be interchanged among the countries. Knowledge as well as teaching skills are necessary. The adaptation of the technology as well as the mindset of the people should also be looked into. Overall, I think involvement of parents in children's education is necessary, otherwise it will not improve as we expected. We have introduced primary education completion exam so that parents can understand that they need to allow their children to go to school and spend more time on education. In Bangladesh there are more than 70 percent of parents who does not have educational background so that they are not aware of that and even they don't know what will be the future of their children. They send their children to schools, but they have no idea about schools, they do not know what their children's are learning, so we try to involve them in the school system. I think we can request the parents to come to school and ask the class-teacher to explain about their children, what they are doing what they are learning in the school, at least after completion of every semester.

The other issue of achieving SDG is feeling of togetherness among us all that already explained by Mrs. Mabel. I also express the same view yesterday. If all the people of the world feels that we are the citizen of the world, this is our mother earth, we are all together and want to develop together, that will certainly bring result. Otherwise, it may not be useful and it may not be easy to implement the SDG goal, especially goal 4. Thank you, thank you for your patience.

Kazuhiro Yoshida (Director, CICE, Hiroshima University)

A little bit of an inside story: Before the SDGs were adopted in the United Nations last year, many people engaged in serious negotiations at various places. I mean, the eight MDGs were adopted in 2000. The sectors included in these goals were better off, but those not included in the MDGs had suffered a lot. When the post-2015 development framework was to be established, people in different sectors conducted aggressive lobbying, determined not to be left out. Fortunately, education was able to secure one goal, Goal 4. As has already been discussed today, the new SDGs are not goals for someone to achieve but represent a framework under which all countries and all people in the world can address universally relevant issues. “Universal” has become a keyword. The “D” of the SDGs stands for “development,” and serious discussions have been conducted on what we are trying to develop sustainably. It was concluded that the SDGs should be transformative. The new framework was formed, based on the harsh criticism and the realization that continuing the same efforts would not make everyone richer. The education sector decided to promote inclusive, equitable, high-quality education. Most people who were not involved in the process of formulating the SDGs, however, think the new framework for development is very difficult to understand. The new goals were finally determined, but in the educational sector, for example, there are terms like “inclusive.” Some people are happy to see it included in the headings, but others say they don’t understand what it means. Even if people are told that “learning outcomes” are now considered more important than before as some people had insisted on their importance, I doubt that everyone will be willing to improve learning outcomes in their countries. If we say we have to do this because it is written in the framework adopted by the international community, I don’t think people will become actively involved in addressing issues at their own initiative. I believe the new development framework calls for people to actively take actions to address their own issues. That is the message of the new framework. It will soon be five years since the Great East Japan Earthquake, which took place on March 11, 2011. The earthquake led to serious disasters, but if there’s one positive thing, Japanese people’s way of thinking about disaster-stricken areas and their way of taking action in the event of disasters have greatly changed. People came to believe that the suffering of others was their own suffering, and they gave serious thoughts to what they could do. Many young people, in particular, took action, and I think this was encouraging. As we are discussing education in this forum, I would like to consider this phenomenon in light of the new SDG4. How can we understand what children and others hope to achieve through education in the true sense of the word? How can we consider the problems they face as our own problems? How can we join them and take action using our knowledge? We must seriously consider these questions and start building a process to make this happen. Just repeating “inclusive and equitable” will not lead people to take action or make them seriously think that these are their own issues. Frankly speaking, Japan cannot contribute to international education cooperation or implement Japanese-style education in foreign countries without understanding its own strong points and issues. If we look at our own position and consider various issues as our own, then we can start finding our own methods of international education cooperation. I don’t intend to offer any conclusions here, but I hope to work with you and promote thinking about this with you so we can take concrete actions. Thank you.

Riho Sakurai (Associate Professor, CICE, Hiroshima University)

Thanks to the keynote speakers and panelists. How did you like the 13th JEF, the Japan Education Forum? As there is little time left, as moderator, I would like to add just one thing. William Arthur Ward, a famous American writer, minister and teacher, wrote: “The mediocre

teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires.” I think this is very true. Education 2030 and the SDG4, discussed today in the keynote speeches and in the panel session, aim at quality education. The maxim by Ward is linked to improving learning and the quality of learning for better education and how to improve students’ learning. It is also related to promoting self-reliant education development, the goal of this forum. In today’s session, we also discussed how we can plant seeds. Perhaps we are in an age in which we learn this from each other. As I said at the beginning of this session, it is not our aim to reach a conclusion at this forum. On behalf of one of the organizers, I hope this forum has provided a thought-provoking opportunity to all of you.

Now we have to close the forum. Please give a warm round of applause to Prof. Imbuga, Prof. Muta, Mr. Shyamal, Mr. Ulep, Ms. Kayashima and Prof. Yoshida. Thank you. All the programs of the 13th Japan Education Forum have now been concluded. On behalf of the organizers, I would like to once again express my sincere gratitude to the keynote speakers and the panelists and above all, to all the participants who have contributed to active discussions throughout the forum. I would also like to thank JICA for its support, the three interpreters for their wonderful work, and the students who worked behind the scenes to prepare for the forum and helped pass the microphones. As I said at the beginning, this forum was jointly organized by the MEXT, the MOFA, the University of Tsukuba and Hiroshima University. I’d like to thank them and the staff members of the secretariat at Hiroshima University for all of their hard work. Thank you very much.