

Wrap-Up Session

Prof. Akyeampong

I think what we would do now as we try to wrap up, give our presenters each 2 or 3 minutes to say one or two things about what they have taken from today's session, and then I would summarize what I think are the key highlights from proceedings today.

Prof. Abe

Today was a very stimulating day for me. I was able to reconsider education from various perspectives. It was a very good day for me. I appreciate that.

Three points. I think Ms. Inoue proposed to this as well, the ability to ask questions, valid or fundamental questions. As Dr. Inprasitha said, metacognitive ability, the ability to set a hypothesis and critical thinking, or rights for children I believe, these are all rights that children must have, not just as working professionals but as general citizens, as people with sovereign rights. It is not nice to have, but it is a right for children to be equipped with such academic abilities and competencies, children anywhere in the world.

Without the premise, various pedagogies can be possible but active learning will be a requirement. This is not nice to have teachers either. This must be a premise or requirement for all teachers.

Dr. Akyeampong, I remember from your presentation about how tangible results were achieved in group work, so time for action is now.

The second point, Professor Inprasitha said that math on the college level is very much a part of school, but teachers are professionals, so teachers must be able to teach at a higher level. They should have the ability to do research and to teach at a university level. They are also practitioners as well, but they should be academics as well.

In that sense, there is not enough time right now for teachers to prepare for class to engage in collaborative research. That is the case in Japan. I am sure that Japan is not an exception. For those countries where school or education reform is underway, please do pay attention to teachers to give them time to do research and engage alone and collaboratively.

Ms. Choudhury said, there is a budgeting issue. So, one must prioritize. For your example, in Japan, among the OECD countries, education expenditure is the lowest against the GDP. Japan has the lowest education budget versus the GDP. This is not just an issue for Ministry of Education. Ministry of Finance should also work on this. I ask the MEXT, the Ministry of Education officials to persuade the Ministry of Finance colleagues to allocate more budget to education.

Relevant to that on various levels, guardians and parents, all kinds of organizations, civil society and government should be engaged to bring about positive change.

The third point, Mr. Kunieda said that it is not just up to the government, but parents have an important role to play. I agree with it completely. Not just to talk

the about school education. I have been talking about the school education, but in Fukui and Akita prefecture, the parents support schools very much. Parents value schools in those prefectures. Public opinion in those prefectures is very much for schools, and Akita and Fukui's education are supported by parents, one must not forget. Parents are very active. They do not just remain silent. Again, this is not just an issue of Japan. School community and parents or families must engage in a partnership strategically to change the way we teach or the way children learn.

Because my time is up, once again, it has been a great day for me. I very much appreciate that.

Facilitator

Thank you very much. Next is Mr. Inprasitha.

Prof. Inprasitha

Thank you for involving me in this very important event. In fact, I am not an expert in curriculum, but I used to be a teacher, and then I moved to the faculty of education and tried to bridge the gap between the faculty of education and the school level. There is a big gap in my country. Usually, the university teacher would not go to the school. Only for two visits and observe like 10 or 15 minutes and then back to the university.

Then, I started to change the way we work with the school. That is why I planned this 30-year project. To achieve the SDG goals, we have to have this in mind. When I started this project 15 years ago, I would like to mention, Professor Masami Isoda and Professor Shimizu, he just mentioned, oh maybe in Thailand it takes 50 years, as Kunieda mentioned. But after we started, now 15 years. But we see some change from the school level, and now it can inform the policymakers. The Ministry of Education launched a big project through the national budget to expand the lesson study project school in the northeast part of Thailand, the most poverty area of this country, and the population is like one-third of the country.

After 15 years, we can expand the idea through the other parts of the country, the sensitive areas - the sound part of our country. But to do this, we have to have collaboration. Thailand and Japan is a good example. We work on this project, the APEC Lesson Study for 12 years. We invite expert teachers from Japan to demonstrate the classroom. Our teachers then see, "Oh, this is our ambition, goal, and we would try to improve the classroom like this." Then, we translate the Japanese textbook to use in our projects.

So far, we started to have a university network. Most of my ex-Ph.D. students who graduated from my university, some of them are here, now working at the number of universities across the country. We have 20 universities, and 45 of them now are working like I started 15 years ago in Khon Kaen. I am really impressed that in order to achieve the SDG goals, the meaning of the sustainability from my point of view, you have to sustain before development because what I mean is to sustain, it means you have not to give up. For example, I am doing this for 15 years, because we have the 15-year experience, then we can reflect on what we have done, then it is development. It is not just development – and then plus sustainability, to my point of view. You have to sustain some things of what you would like to do, and then you have a place for development. Thanks for involving me in this very important forum.

Mr. Inoue

Thank you very much for the introduction. I appreciate very much. Today's forum has been an opportunity for me to set aside my perspective on education. My initiative is very much about that to take a new approach to education. Today's forum made me realize that there is more that I can do, there are other things that I can do in my daily work.

Hearing different questions for the past hour has been stimulating as well. The indelible impression left was left with me with a question, for whom do we conduct active learning? Active learning for whom? I have to be careful that what I do is becoming a goal rather than the vehicle tools, so we should not make active learning the goal or simply a vehicle or tool. The panelists face issues in their daily work in different realms. Finding an issue, solving an issue must be enabled by teachers first. If we have a student who is facing a problem, how to solve that problem? In order to provide guidance, the teacher must have a wider perspective. We talked about taking Japanese education abroad today. It should not be imposed. It should be done from the perspective of providing an option to solve a big problem. Japanese education is one such option. That should be the mindset. So, not to impose but teachers first of all being able to engage in critical thinking, and teachers themselves should have a broad perspective to realize that there are many options. I pay a lot of attention to metacognition as I mentioned, but one of the biggest challenges that I face now is students inclination to place priority on practical issues, things that are practical, useful right away. If we tie learning to real society, that means we only look at practical skills. There should be conceptualized knowledge that would be viable in a decade or two. I want to make sure that students have in them conceptualized knowledge. Of course practical skills that are useful right away, important, but I think what is not useful right away is as important as knowledge. Thank you.

Facilitator

Thank you very much. Ms. Rasheda, please.

Ms. Choudhury

Thank you so much. It has been such an incredible experience for me, particularly listening to all the diverse stakeholders on the dais this morning and questions from the floor. It has been really very enriching for me, because I work at the grassroots level, and when I come to these types of meetings and interactions and sessions, I really keep on thinking that when we go back, particularly when I go back, I have this accountability to our constituency who are the education practitioners and education receivers. What do we do as campaigners? There have been a lot of wonderful examples, for example, Professor Abe's active learning. This one we have been trying in a different way in our countries, many of us. But we now have something visible which we could really adapt. Then, work on it, learn from it on the situation. That is possible. But the very valid question and the suggestion that came from Professor Abe that we have to lobby with our governments. That is our role I suppose, civil society's role.

One thing that we have been discovering in many countries because I am part of the global campaign for education, we work in more than 100 countries, our partners, our members are working, we have learned that most of the time academia and NGOs, they do not work together. They work in parallel streams. Working for the same goal but not working together. That is where I suppose we

have to work a lot. That is an action point that we always try to focus on, and that is what from this forum I suppose we have at least learned that we can work together on this type of things.

But we need three things, what we say 'three Cs.' 'Context.' We have to contextualize. Then, we have to understand what sort of 'Capacity' that we have. We have to build up our capacity, human resource, technical capacity, financial resources, etcetera. But then we also have the commitment, not only from the state from the government, but also from ourselves, that are we really committing to do something that at the end of the day will be beneficial for whom it is intended—the learners, the communities, the parents. That is why it is so important to get the hard evidence from the field, and that is where the importance of the researchers and data generators is so important, because unless we have hard evidence, like what Professor Abe has done, we have to convince our governments, and we need to have that, and that is where a lot of work and action points that we have to make.

The other point that I would really like to focus on, we should have talked a little more about the young students, not only primary but secondary level, junior, high and university level, or undergrad students. We need to listen to them. That is what we normally do not do. What Professor Abe has also mentioned that the teachers teach, and that is it. The interaction is so much important, that is okay, but we have to listen to them. They can even solve problems that we may not be in a position to even comprehend. Thank you. We have learned from our field experience that these young people can really guide us. They could even tell us how to actually practice something like active learning, because they are the ones who are looking forward to their new roles, new assignments, new classes, etcetera. So, we need to listen to them, that is what is very important.

Thank you so much for being here and thank you so much for giving me this opportunity as somebody from the grassroots community but working with people like all these dignitaries around the table. It is wonderful to be here. Thank you, Japan. Thank you, MEXT.

Facilitator

Thank you very much. Mr. Kunieda, please.

Mr. Kunieda

Thank you. I would like to thank all the participants for the active discussions. For me it was a precious learning experience. I have been involved in various projects in Africa working with education officers and school-level actors such as teachers, parents and local community members. But you are supposed to work given the context of each country, and there are different challenging situations wherever I go. Maybe, I had an idea that might work, but it did not materialize. I felt today that I myself might have just stopped thinking or seeking solutions. Of course, there are different challenges, but when it comes to active learning, which is the major topic today, it can really help develop children's capabilities and life skills. I really would like to see this approach spread or simply the learning of the children improve with help of the approach.

As Professor Abe and others mentioned, the burden on the schoolteachers can be quite heavy because they have to prepare for active learning in the classroom. It is

therefore important for the parents and the community members to support the teachers so that they can really concentrate on teaching in the classroom. We shouldn't leave the teachers alone but rather support them. That attitude or behavior is important. This is something that I had on my mind for some time now, but I once again reaffirmed that belief.

While we were had discussions today, I was thinking about what next we can do in Africa. Of course, there is no single answer to this, but for example, whether it is active learning or something else, children taking the initiative to learn on their own, that is what we want. Let us say you have a class of 50 students or 100 students to one teacher, or not even one full-time teacher, but if that is the situation, what can you do? Instead of saying there is nothing you can do, you would rather think of, for example, reorganizing the different grade classes into groups according to the level of understanding regardless of the grades. Or, you might be organizing extracurricular remedial activities so you do not have to confine yourself to the curriculum-base conventional approach. We should engage ourselves to think about innovative approaches and put them into practice. This is what I was thinking about during the whole day. Today, I have been fortunate to receive a number of critical comments and questions. I would like to make maximum use of what I have learned today so that we can ensure quality learning for all children around the world. Thank you very much.

Facilitator

Thank you very much. Finally, Dr. Akyeampong, please.

Prof. Akyeampong

Thank you very much. I want to also thank everybody for the contribution and also what I have learned from not just the presenters but for your questions and your comments. It has been a very enriching experience.

I reflected on the theme for this meeting, it was on the issue of quality of education, and I feel that we have addressed an important issue about this theme, which is the learner, and all the presentations I feel have focused on the learner and what we can do to provide better quality education for the learner. Even though we have had a presentation that focused on the curriculum, focused on who is responsible for the learners, we have all come to the issue that it is the learner who is at the center of our work. We already have been reminded that time is moving fast as far as 2030 is concerned. Rasheda reminded us that already we have spent 10% of the time. So, the talking, the research, everything that we know has to move into action, and that she reminded us. I feel that there is a lot that we have learned. I certainly have learned, and it is very refreshing to know that in whichever country context you are talking about, whether in Japan, in any part of Africa, in Asia, the central issue is about the learner, and to make the learner the center of our work so that we ensure that every child has the opportunity to learn.

I leave with this hope that we have moved the agenda forward, not simply by talking about the targets, about the challenges, but we have moved from – we have talked about the realities, we have talked about the challenges, but I am happy to say we have ended on the prospects. We have not just mapped out the difficulties and the challenges, but we have started putting forward some solutions, particularly looking at how active learning can make a difference in the lives of many learners. So, I feel that the conference has really given us some clear

messages about what our commitments should be and what we should be thinking about and doing in our respective capacities to make sure that the learner is at the center of our business.

We know that when we had EFA, it was all about access. Now, we are thinking about learning. But I think we should not lose sight that so many children still do not have access. So, it is about quality access, meaningful learning for children who are out there who probably are not in school. We can have all the best learning in the classroom, but if they are not in the school, they cannot learn. So, I am very encouraged by that, and I thank you all for your contribution and for what I have learned today. Thank you.

Facilitator

Thank you very much. Dr. Akyeampong, thank you very much for a good wrap-up. Therefore, I would like to give you one comment. Today's theme was the Quality of Education for SDGs: Realities and Challenges of Education Policy. Once again and again, many times active learning, interactive and deep learning were mentioned today, but this is not limited to the learning in the developed countries. In that context, how to secure the time is one aspect. Also, community and school should be prepared to collaborate, and how to lobby the government administration, and what kind of dialog we should have with the government, these kinds of perspectives were also presented today.

The former President of South Africa, Mr. Nelson Mandela, who is a Nobel Laureate, had following proverb. He said that education can be utilized to make the world change and that it is the strongest weapon, powerful weapon which can be used to change the world. Inclusiveness and fairness should be at the center, and also pursuing the peace, and such kind of promotion of sustainable development, what kind of education will be necessary in the future. I sincerely hope that this forum will give you some insight, and if that is the case, we are very pleased.

With this, we would like to conclude the 15th JEF for SDGs, Japan Education Forum for Sustainable Development Goals. On behalf of our organizers, panelists, and keynote speaker and also those participants from the floor who made a significant contribution to this forum, thank you very much. I would like to express my great appreciation to you all. Also JICA who delivered a lecture. Also at the back today, we have excellent simultaneous interpreters, so we are very grateful to them all. Thank you very much.

Also, we have many students who offered the helping hand to this forum, thank you very much. Finally, over the several months, the secretariat of the form who made this happen and also the four relevant organizers, thank you very much for your contribution as well.

One final request for housekeeping. First of all, before you leave, please make sure to fill out the blue evaluation forms. Once you complete, please handover the completed evaluation form to the staff at the back or please put them into the collection box. Later, you can access this questionnaire form on the website. Those that are submitted by tomorrow will be tabulated, and then that will be disclosed on the website. The results will be disclosed on the website. Also, some people every

year seem to take these receivers with themselves, but please make sure to return these interpretation devices.

Ladies and gentlemen, amid rainy situation, thank you very much. Thank you very much for your patience and thank you very much for your staying with us until the end. Those speakers and presenters and the participants, we are focused on the interaction among all these participants and the speakers. Today, we had a very active and constructive discussion, so thank you very much for asking questions from the floor. Also, the speakers, thank you very much for earnestly responding to those questions.

We would like to conclude the 15th JEF for SDGs. Please give us a round of applause. Thank you very much.