

Japan Education Forum for Sustainable Development Goals (16th JEF for SDGs)

**“Current Status of the Education of the Next
Generation, and Challenges to Its Sustainable
Growth, with a Focus on Early Childhood”**

Date : Friday, February 22, 2019

Venue : Assembly Hall, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology,
Tokyo

Organized by: Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT)
Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA)
Hiroshima University
University of Tsukuba

Supported by: Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)

*Languages: English-Japanese simultaneous interpretations

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Background and Objectives

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) has become one of the most important issues that emerged from the era called Education for All (EFA). One of the targets for Goal 4 (Education) in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is “ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education” by 2030. Furthermore, the rights of children to survival, development, and protection are guaranteed in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, concluded in 196 countries and territories worldwide, including Japan. However, millions of children around the world are still deprived of these rights.

The care and education of children still shows significant regional disparities, and there are many countries where no such program has been put into practice for children under the age of three. Apparently, ECCE coverage differs conspicuously among countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. Nevertheless, the comprehensive spread and improvement of early childhood care and education in every country is of extreme importance to the health and happiness of children, as well as to the future development of each country. As outlined in the SDGs, the goal should begin by providing an inclusive, fair, and quality education, and fostering the opportunity of lifelong study to all people,” which “shall signify the provision of ‘strong foundations’ to children during their childhood, and which should also continue during adult life.

Given such circumstances, this year’s JEF for SDGs will focus on early childhood and discuss, from various aspects including the policies concerned and co-operation/assistance, the current status and tasks surrounding the provision of a positive foundation for children, which is expected to be passed on to the next generation. In the keynote speech, the benefit to children of early childhood care and education will be validated in light of SDGs’ viewpoint, and we fully expect to have a very meaningful exchange of opinions with the participants at the panel discussion.

Japan Education Forum (JEF) is a forum which has provided opportunities for open exchanges of views and ideas on international cooperation on education by diverse actors such as officials in the public sector, practitioners of international development and NGOs, and scholars since 2004. In addition, JEF is also aimed to spread Japan’s experiences of education and its

international cooperation in education based on educational practices globally.

Program

Theme : “Current Status of the Education of the Next Generation, and Challenges to Its Sustainable Growth, with a Focus on Early Childhood”

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Schedule

Morning Session

9:30-	Registration
10:00-10:20	Opening Session Opening Address: Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Japan Opening Address: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan
10:20-10:50	Keynote speech 1 Lynette Okengo, Executive Director, Africa Early Childhood Network (AfECN)
10:50-11:20	Keynote speech 2 Takashi Hamano, Professor, Graduate School of Humanities and Sciences, Ochanomizu University
11:20-12:00	Questions and Answers with Keynote Speakers
12:00-13:30	Lunch Break

Afternoon Session

13:30-15:00	Panel Session Moderator: Mathias Urban, Professor, School of Language, Literacy & Early Childhood
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Education, Dublin City

University

Panelists:

- Dwi Priyono, Director, South East Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Centre
for Early Childhood Care Education and Parenting (SEAMEO CECCEP)
- Keiko Nakamura, Vice Principal, Hiroshima University Kindergarten
- Junko Takaoka, Research Manager, Child Sciences and Parenting Research Office, Benesse
Educational Research and Development Institute
- Mathias Urban, Professor, School of Language, Literacy & Early Childhood Education, Dublin City University
- Christine Chen, President, Association for Early Childhood Educators (Singapore)

15:00-15:30	Break
15:30-16:30	Open Floor Discussions, Questions and Answers
16:30-17:00	Wrap-up Session
17:00	Closing

Opening Address (Tomoko Ukishima, Senior Vice-Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology)

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for your introduction. My name is Tomoko Ukishima, the State Minister for Education, and also, I am responsible for Olympic and Paralympic Games. I am very happy to see so many of you present here. I would like to express my sincere appreciation and welcome to all of you. Thank you very much.

With the support and participation of many of you, we are now able to hold the Japan Education Forum for Sustainable Development Goals. I am very happy, and again, I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to all of you. Ever since this forum was established in 2004, this has been the meeting in order to have a good international cooperation in education. We have had very good exchanges. Now, within the country and also outside of the country as well, many people have been working on the realization of the goals of the SDGs, especially important is the education. This is considered to be a key for the realization of 17 goals of SDGs.

Based on this, in this forum, I think it is increasingly important to have the sharing experiences of the good cases and think about better strategies within MEXT, the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology and Sports. We have been working on SDGs' realization. Especially important is the ECD education for sustainable development which is considered to be a key based on the UN resolution. We have more than 1000 UNESCO schools which are the centers of excellence for that.

Now, in this forum, we will focus on the early childhood education. The early childhood education would be the foundation for the persona formation of the children, and this is very important to secure the high quality childhood education. For all the children, it is important. In Japan, based on this education, starting October this year, the childhood education for the kindergartens and the nursery schools for the ages 3 to 5 would become free of charges. Regardless of the economic conditions, the high quality education for children would be secured. We are in the process of preparation of the bills for the submission at the Diet sessions.

On the other hand, looking at the entire world, depending on the country, depending on the region, there are differences, major disparities for the quality and quantity of the education. This also is a very important concern for the international community.

In our early childhood education in Japan, within the curriculum, we have the realization of sustainable development goals in here and also in recent years, many of the practices are exported from Japan. It is important for Japan to work on the international cooperation,

especially the formation of curriculum and the faculty development of the teachers. It is expected that we will play the leadership role.

I sincerely hope that you are able to have a deep discussion about the international cooperation for quality education for children, and at the same time, I would like to expect a high level of contribution of this forum for the realization of this goal. Finally, allow me to express my sincere appreciation to all of the people who have made it possible to hold this forum, and at the same time, I again would like to express my sincere gratitude to all of you. I hope this forum would be a meaningful one for all of you. With this, I would like to close my opening address. Thank you very much again.

(End)

Opening Address (Hiroshi Matsuura, Deputy Director-General, International Cooperation Bureau,)

Ladies and gentlemen, it is indeed a pleasure for us to be able to hold this Japan Education Forum for Sustainable Development Goals. We would like to express our sincere gratitude for your participation.

We focus upon the current status of the education of the next generation and challenges to sustainable growth with a focus on early childhood. We look forward to having deep and productive discussions from various perspectives. The Japanese government established the headquarters to promote SDGs headed by the Prime Minister, and the Deputy Chief of the Headquarter is the Chief Cabinet Secretary and the Minister of Foreign Affairs since the SDGs were established and adopted in 2015. At the end of last year, the SDG Action Plan 2019 was adopted, and their focus is upon business innovation, regional revitalization, and empowerment of next generation of women as three pillars of Japan's SDGs in order to make Japan's own contributions at the various fora, at the TICAD 7 and the SDG, the Head of the States' meetings in the areas of education for nation building and human resource development. The Argentine Chairmanship G20 last year agreed upon G20 Initiative for Early Childhood Development and the Japanese are to chair the G20 this year. We will also focus upon the education and human resource development, including the early childhood.

The quality of early childhood, the education and its care is important in order to break the vicious cycle of poverty. Professor Heckman of Chicago University, Economics Nobel Prize laureate also demonstrated the effect of early childhood education for the higher income level

and social success and health later in the human life. The enrolment in school sometimes is not accompanied with the basic education skills, and it is important to nurture patience, motivation, self-confidence, cooperation, and non-cognitive skills at early childhood to be prepared for school education. The Japanese primary and junior high schools have day-duties, cleaning, school lunch service duties, and the classroom education, in addition to classroom lessons, for physical and emotional as well as intellectual development.

In Egypt, this attracted the attention of the President El-Sisi, and then, in 2016, Egypt-Japan Education Partnership was concluded to focus upon the pre-school and primary education as well as the technical education and the higher education. Over the last 20 years, JICA volunteers also have been active in daycare and kindergarten in Egypt, providing know-how and experience of learning through play.

We are very pleased to have Ms. Okengo of Africa Early Childcare Network and also the member of the ECD. We hope that today's program will be helpful as a part of our important efforts globally as well as in Africa as we organize TICAD 7 this year.

(End)

Summary

Japan Education Forum for Sustainable Development Goals (16th JEF for SDGs)

“Current Status of the Education of the Next Generation, and Challenges to Its Sustainable Growth, with a Focus on Early Childhood”

Summary of the forum

The Japan Education Forum (JEF) has provided opportunities for the open exchange of views and ideas on international cooperation on education by diverse actors, such as officials in the public sector, practitioners of international development and NGOs, and scholars, since 2004. Since 2017, JEF has been held as “JEF for SDGs” to address the shared view that we need to go beyond international development aid by mobilizing new actors and constructing new modalities to achieve SDGs, including Education 2030. This year's JEF for SDGs focused on early childhood. JEF has been cohosted by MOET, MOFA, Hiroshima University, and Tsukuba University.

This year, the 16th JEF for SDGs was held at the Assembly Hall (3rd floor) of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. The forum focused on international cooperation in the ECCE and provided us with the opportunity to discuss ECCE in Japan, southeast Asia, Europe, and Africa from the perspective of current situations, systems, and networks as well as the possibility of using the ECCE program for the next generation to realize SDGs' goal4. During the morning session, Lynette Okengo, executive director of the Africa Early Childhood Network (AfECN), and Takashi Hamano, professor of the Graduate School of Humanities and Sciences, Ochanomizu University, gave keynote speeches. During the following session of questions and answers with the keynote speakers, several participants asked questions and stated their opinions, taking part in free and active discussions. During the afternoon session, five panelists gave presentations about ECCE in their own countries and regions under the theme of "the possibility of ECCE programs for the next generation." During the following open floor question and answer session, five panelists and two keynote speakers had Q and As and discussions on ECCE with participants. During the wrap-up session, keynote speakers and panelists reflected on this forum, and with that, the forum came to an end successfully. More than 120 people participated in this forum, including diplomats of each country's embassy, government officials, representatives of organizations of developmental aid, academicians, students, members of NGOs and NPOs, and the public.

Keynote speech by Dr. Lynette Okengo

In a speech titled "Early Childhood Programming in Africa Challenges and Lessons Learnt," Dr. Okengo introduced the current status and problems to tackle in Africa, stressing the necessity of international cooperation and structuring networks to improve the quality of ECCE. First, she stated that child development was composed of five developmental domains: physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and spiritual domains. She said that these domains are all linked to one another and are important for child development. She noted the importance of cooperation between domestic administrative organizations and international organizations to ensure child development in Africa. Related to the current status of the ECCE program in Africa, Dr. Okengo referred to the risks that impede child development, such as poverty, nutritional deficiency, and child abuse and neglect. Based on this, she noted that it is critically important for the future of children to reduce poverty in Africa and that 60% of all infants and children in Africa are exposed to some type of risk, with some regional differences. In relation to this, she referred to institutionalized ECCE programs and educational policies, such as Agenda 2063 and CESA16-25, that have been launched in several countries in Africa for children to not only live but also to stand against crisis. Dr. Okengo referred to the problems related to ECCE in Africa as many people not having been educated so as to improve the function of communities with actual effects; that the quantity of ECCE

has increased, without guaranteeing the quality of ECCE teachers and sufficient quality teachers in Africa areas; and that policy makers do not regard these situations surrounding ECCE as their own problems. The idea behind these problems is that no access to ECCE will lead to no development of the economy in the future. Dr. Okengo stressed that it was essential to keep caring for children under 3 years old, with a special focus on individual growth, by realizing high-level commitments of international organizations to ECCE and by creating synergy through political decision making and efficient resource distribution and investment. Last but not least, related to the importance of constructing networks, Dr. Okengo pointed out the importance of networks, where the current situation of ECCE in the world could be stressed and shared globally, as well as the importance of networks such as the Early Childhood Action Network, whose core is advocacy, communication, and definition of program, stating that the time is right because visibility has been provided and maximized by the commitment of the G20 initiative for Early Childhood Development, the SDGs.

Keynote speech by Prof. Hamano

During the second keynote speech, under the theme of “the characteristics and potentiality of ECCE in Japan: Challenges towards SDGs,” Prof. Hamano gave a speech on the characteristics of ECCE in Japan and the potentiality of its educational cooperation within a global context from the perspective of the quality and content of ECCE in Japan. In detail, Prof. Hamano gave a lecture on seven points about ECCE that included: “1. ECCE as foundation for lifelong development”; “2. ECCE and non-cognitive skills”; “3. Overcoming child poverty”; “4. Parent–child relations early in life”; “5. Characteristics of Japan’s ECCE”; “6. Policy changes in Japan’s ECCE ”; and “7. Global cooperation to achieve SDG.” First, Prof. Hamano stated that ECCE has a great spreading effect on each field of SDGs because it has been the foundation for lifelong development as well as an important realm in relation to education, welfare, economy, and labor, stressing that ECCE is a critically essential activity that is not just about preparation for elementary school but also for lifelong personality formation. Second, Prof. Hamano stated that non-cognitive skills have been one of the pillars in the new curriculum, and these skills have been improved by ECCE, leading to academic achievement, employment, good income, good health, and prevention of crime by introducing some empirical studies. It was pointed out that it is important to have relations with persons who understand one another, the constant presence of a supportive person, and a comfortable place to return to in order to achieve this. Third, related to child poverty, Prof. Hamano said that the child poverty rate in Japan is relatively high among OECD countries and that educational support, particularly attentive care from early childhood, is important. Prof. Hamano pointed out that according to a national survey of the MEXT, home environment on its own, including financial status, does not determine a child’s non-cognitive skills, and it is

necessary to increase their non-cognitive skills and help them overcome disadvantages through proper support during childhood. Fourth, related to parental involvement in early childhood, Prof. Hamano pointed out that parental involvement is essential to having a balanced lifestyle and improving attitudes toward active learning in early childhood and stressed parental attitudes and parents and children sharing time at home. In addition, Prof. Hamano referred to the fact that parents who are university graduates with 68 and higher deviation values and who obtain difficult qualifications have a tendency to raise children through a sharing-style discipline, where they let their children play hard and freely. Fifth, Prof. Hamano stated that the characteristics of Japan's education are to emphasize "self-motivating activities and play," focusing on childcare through the environment, and it values allowing children to concentrate on and devote themselves to play and other activities. In addition, it was pointed out that interactions between children of different ages are also a characteristic of Japan's education. Sixth, related to Japan's policy of ECCE and its trends, Prof. Hamano pointed out that the new ECCE curriculum in Japan stipulates that a "PDCA cycle" be adopted to improve the quality of ECCE, and new courses of study for kindergarten and nursery childcare guidance and guidelines clarified 10 elements of the ideal image at the end of the early childhood period to link children in early childhood with educational activities in elementary school. It was pointed out that it is essential to love children unconditionally in ECCE. Last but not least, Prof. Hamano referred to the slow development of Japan's research on ECCE and the importance of adapting the research in developed countries to Japan's attributes and conditions. Prof. Hamano introduced his experiences in a training program of ECCE for 15 years in African countries and raised the question of what kind of contributions we could make in the world based on Japan's characteristics in ECCE.

Following the two keynote speeches, the questions and answers portion began with the keynote speakers, people in universities, people working in NGOs, and consultants for educational development. Among the questions posed to both of the keynote speakers, especially important questions were as follows: "I am afraid it has been so important to make strong connections between kindergarten and primary school so that education in kindergarten has been like education in primary school, hasn't it?"; "What role does innovation play in ECCE?"; and "How are perspectives of ESD and SDGs reflected in contents of early childcare and support?"

Panel Session

During the afternoon, a panel session was held under the theme of "the potential of ECCE for the next generation's education," and Prof. Mathias Urban moderated and facilitated the session. Related to the theme, five panelists presented opinions and perspectives about each

country's situation and activities and the research of the institutions to which they belonged.

The first presenter, Dwi Priyono, the director the SEAMEO Regional Centre for ECCE and Parenting, presented the role, knowledge, and experience of SEAMEO CECCEP as a gateway for ASEAN countries to achieve SDG4.2 after he introduced examples of various commitments to ECCE and the best practices of Indonesia in activities related to ECCE under the theme of "SEA gateway in Achieving SDG4.2 on ECCE." Dr. Priyono pointed out that the "Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 3, Paragraph 2)" and "SDG4 Quality Education" were commitments to ECCE from the global perspective and that "SEAMEO Priority Areas" targeted ECCE as priority area 1 from the local perspective, emphasizing the importance of commitments to ECCE. Afterward, Dr. Priyono stated that quality ECCE could create benefits for low-income individuals and could bring about impacts on health, society, and economy, based on the research results of James Heckman. Dr. Priyono also mentioned MoEC and that investments to quality ECCE consisted of three investments: "Age Investment," "Environment Investment," and "Implementation Investment." Following this, Dr. Priyono pointed out that the general problems of ECCE were disparity of the quality of service between urban areas and rural areas and the lack of ECE centers and quality ECE teachers in most villages in many countries. In particular, Dr. Priyono stated that SEAMEO member countries in ECCE have four challenges: disparity of access to quality ECCE, lack of qualified teaching staff, uneven competence levels of teaching staff, and insufficient policy and learning frameworks. Afterward, Dr. Priyono introduced challenges of ECCE, using Indonesia as an example, stating that Indonesia had launched a national policy related to ECCE through presidential decrees and regulations. Dr. Priyono clarified the enrolment number in CEEC institutions and the disparity between prefectures by introducing current statistics of ECCE in Indonesia. Dr. Priyono pointed out the importance of supporting girls in transitioning from early childhood education to lower primary education, supporting the creation of a gender-responsive and safe teaching-learning environment, engaging teachers to develop gender-responsive teaching, and increasing parents', teachers', and governments' understanding and commitment in realizing gender equality in order to achieve SDG 4.2. Dr. Priyono also introduced the fact that parents and teachers were engaged in ECE and shared relevant information with one another under the leadership of the 'ECE Mother,' which consisted of the wives of the key personalities. Lastly, Dr. Priyono introduced the roles of SEAMEO CECCEP and stated that the roles are research and development for various stakeholders, training and capacity building, and becoming a research hub about ECCE through an increase in advocacy and partnership, as well as clarifying the reach of SDG 4.2. in ECCE, ending the speech with the introduction of its 5-year development plan and 24 SEAMEO regional centers and networks.

Secondly, Ms. Keiko Nakamura, the vice principal of Hiroshima University Kindergarten, gave a speech about ECE in forest kindergartens from the perspective of ESD under the theme of “Early Childhood Education Based on ESD: A Report on the Children of a “Forest Kindergarten.” Ms. Nakamura began her speech by introducing general information about Hiroshima University Kindergarten as a kindergarten surrounded by rich nature in the mountains, focusing on information about class, staff, and education hours. Afterward, Ms. Nakamura stated that the aim of education and the development of children’s attitudes is composed of three aspects: ①) self, ②) others, and ③) environment. Ms. Nakamura pointed out that the characteristics of ECE in kindergarten are to enhance children’s zest for living by fostering close ties with abundant nature and with their friends, providing an environment for them to express their individuality and grow together in the forests and mountains, where the kindergarten is located. In order to have a concrete image of ECE in kindergarten, Ms. Nakamura introduced some pictures of annual events at the kindergarten that showed children climbing trees, playing in the forest, and baking and eating pancakes in the spring; children enjoying in waterslides and playing in the mud and rain in the summer; children roasting and eating chestnuts and sweet potatoes in autumn; and children making leaves by the ice in the winter. Then, Ms. Nakamura explained that the vision for a forest kindergarten was formulated in 2006. The kindergarten started “research on a curriculum to develop children’s capacities to build a sustainable society (ESD)” (designated by MEXT) from 2016–2019, and it joined the UNESCO Associated School Project Network (ASPnet) in 2017. As for current issues about ECCE, Ms. Nakamura pointed out a tendency to focus on tangible and academic abilities, which is not appropriate for the original goal of ECCE; a decline in physical strength and agility; and growing numbers of children who lack motivations or dreams. She stated that it is important to provide them with opportunities to foster sensibility through rich, inspiring experiences, to stratify their curiosity and imagination, and for them to feel a sense of accomplishment. In this sense, Ms. Nakamura emphasized that kindergarten was the best environment to ensure children have the experiences described above in the forest. Afterward, Ms. Nakamura introduced research based on ESD’s perspective and said that the research focuses on fostering children who can position themselves between relationships with others and those with nature, with the statement that living and playing in kindergarten could be the foundation for them to live by. Ms. Nakamura focused on “Forest Days” as one of the characteristics of the kindergarten’s curriculum and pointed out that during the “Forest Day,” children play in the forest all day long, and “Forest Experts” who have expertise in nature connect children and parents with nature, and she stated that the experiences children gained by focusing on playing would remain in their memories as formative experiences. Lastly, Ms. Nakamura ended the lecture by introducing a linkage

between kindergartens and elementary schools, which pointed out that children who graduated from kindergarten could gradually adapt themselves to new lifestyles and classes after their difficulties.

Third, Christine Chen, president of the Association for Early Childhood Educators in Singapore, gave lectures on educational systems, teacher training systems in ECCE, and supporting systems for children in early childhood in Singapore under the theme of “Nurturing Teachers and Building Supporting Systems for Children Birth to Three.” Dr. Chen began the speech with an explanation of the background of formulating nurturing systems for children in early childhood in Singapore, stating that the urgent need for nurturing childcare teachers had come about in the 1980s when the economy was booming and women were needed to join the workforce, and that teacher training had started for ECCE. Dr. Chen explained that the focus on children from birth to age 3 had come about in the late 1990s as a result of the drive to have more children in Singapore, resulting in more infant care centers being opened, and that those trends had created the need for a special Certificate for Infant and Toddler (CIT) in Singapore. Then, Dr. Chen pointed out that it is necessary to acquire a license and to renew the license every certain period with satisfaction requirements to be a teacher for children from birth to 6 years old. Regarding teacher licenses and teacher training, Dr. Chen explained that the scale of teacher training for nurturing children from birth to 3 years old was small, but it was thought to be needed when certain childcare centers opened in Singapore. Related to the current systems, Dr. Chen explained that it is necessary to acquire a degree in a basic course and accredited license course to be a teacher for children 4–6 years old and that it is necessary to acquire professional teaching licenses for children from birth to 3 years of age. Related to the curriculum framework, Dr. Chen pointed out that the first nurturing early learners’ framework for children 4–6 years old was developed, and after that, an early years development framework for children from birth to 3 years old had been developed in Singapore. Based on this framework, Dr. Chen emphasized that teachers for children aged 4 –6 years and teachers for children from birth to 3 years of age should have been trained from different perspectives. Dr. Chen asked us how we should have trained teachers for children from birth to 3 years old and how these children recognized the world and could learn from it. In order to answer these questions, Dr. Chen showed some videos where children were playing, and she pointed out the importance of the parents and adults to watch, call, and care for children who are growing and developing in a seamless way; to let children use items appropriate to their development stage; and not to hurry or put pressure on children. In addition, Dr. Chen said it is essential for training teachers for children from birth to 3 years old to know how children learn, provide opportunities, and give children time to put into practice what they have learned because they have trials, discover things, and

attempt to find solutions in this unforecastable world. Lastly, Dr. Chen pointed out the importance of observing children and learning from them in this uncertain world and ended the speech by stating that we should care for children from birth to 3 years old together.

Fourthly, Ms. Junko Takaoka, the research manager for the Child Sciences and Parenting Research Office, Benesse Educational Research and Development Institute, gave a lecture about infant development processes from the perspective of a thinktank belonging to a private company under the theme of “Longitudinal Study on Infant Development Process.” In detail, her speech was composed of an introduction about general information from the Benesse Educational Research and Development Institute, a longitudinal study on the infant development process, and the concept of a borderless research network. First, Ms. Takaoka introduced Benesse business contents, such as Shinken Zemi and Kodomo Challenge, and she introduced general information on the Benesse Educational Research and Development Institute as a thinktank. Afterward, Ms. Takaoka pointed out the change in parents as part of longitudinal research about the infant development process. Ms. Takaoka pointed out that this includes the diversification of ages of parents who have a child, an increase in the number of parents who have never communicated with children since their own child had been born, an increase in the number of infants who spent most of their time at home or at nursery schools, a decrease in education costs, and a change in values related to childcare of parents who want nursery schools to provide their children with opportunities to learn academic knowledge and cultural lessons. Ms. Takaoka questioned what we should do to have children acquire rich values in collaboration with one another in changing social environments and introduced research on the attitude of active learning, composed of achieving goals, managing emotions, and working with others. Ms. Takaoka pointed out that the attitude of active learning is a skill we could acquire throughout our lives, that it is not an inherent skill, and that it is important to nurture infants to acquire cognitive skills and non-cognitive skills in a balanced way because they are influenced by one another. In addition, Ms. Takaoka pointed out that the course of study for kindergarten and nursery childcare guidance has three pillars describing qualities and abilities to develop, one of which is the attitude of active learning. Ms. Takaoka said that Benesse divides the attitude of active learning into the following five categories: curiosity, cooperativeness, persistence, self-control, and self-assertion. Then, Ms. Takaoka pointed out the tendency of the development process from junior to second grade in that those children who have a lifestyle in junior class have a better attitude of active learning (cooperativeness) in middle class and that those children perform better with letters, numbers, and thinking (languages) in senior class. Based on this, Ms. Takaoka stated that it is important for parents to have an attitude of respect toward children’s motivation and encourage them to think by introducing surveys related to parental involvement with children to grow an

“attitude of active learning” and that the experiences of children to concentrate on playing and to have cooperative relationships with others in kindergarten could be connected to the formation of an attitude of active learning when they graduate from kindergarten. Lastly, Ms. Takaoka ended the speech with the introduction of a website named “Child Research Net,” which is a transnational network managed by the Benesse Educational Research and Development Institute that connects research findings related to problems surrounding children all over the world and introduces them in many languages.

Fifth, as the final panelist and moderator, Mathias Urban, a professor in the School of Language, Literacy and Early Childhood Education, Dublin City University, gave a speech about what ECCE itself was like and international policy trends surrounding it under the theme “early childhood in troubled times: competent systems and new global conversations.” First, as an impact of family environment on ECCE, Prof. Urban introduced a picture showing a family that can only speak the ethnic minority’s language in an ethnic minority village in the Andes and pointed out that the family had been holding a ritual to welcome a newborn infant to their community, and a young boy understood the situation and actively participated in the ritual. After that, Prof. Urban questioned how parents should have participated in ECCE and whether adults perceived children not only as passively existing but also as having knowledge. From this perspective, Prof. Urban pointed out the importance of thinking about the meaning of ECCE in a certain society in order to consider the quality of policies about ECCE and said that the meaning of “being a child” depends on the context and background and that education and care are practiced on the basis of the local context. In addition, Prof. Urban cited a phrase written by Paulo Freire, which stated that ECCE is a political practice that has a historical concreteness and immediateness. Then, from the perspective of the importance of the environment of ECCE, Prof. Urban introduced a dialogue between a father and a teacher surrounding a young child and emphasized the importance of not forgetting the problem of poverty through a description of the father, who lamented his child going to school with dirty and shabby clothes and without showering, and by describing the teacher, who lamented the student lacking conditions to study at home. Prof. Urban pointed out that these poverty problems have arisen not only in third-world countries but also in Europe, where being “poor” and “marginalized” has increased and where boundaries between the center and the periphery have become blurred and that all the countries face these phenomena. Prof. Urban showed two perspectives: early childhood services as an investment, such as return on investment, and as a public good and public responsibility, and he pointed out that it is essential to think about ECCE on the ground. Related to this, Prof. Urban shared his thoughts on the meaning of being a child and being raised in a certain society depending on each society, and he stated that it is necessary to reconsider the meaning of education itself in a certain

country or region. Finally, Prof. Urban referred to an international agreement to create a quality framework to guarantee qualified ECCE through integral and inclusive networks all over the world in a report submitted to the G20 summit convened in Argentina related to the policy framework of the ECCE. Prof. Urban ended the speech with the statement that it is necessary to make space to discuss ECCE at all levels of systems and to question the contents and goals of ECCE as well as access to it.

A question and discussion session began based on questionnaires gathered from the floor after the panel session ended. This session was led by Prof. Urban, who relayed some questions and opinions gathered from the floor to the appropriate panelists. The main discussion concentrated on questions and answers about how to inform the needs of the parents and the community for policy formulation about ECCE in each country and about the direction of the curriculum of ECCE in Japan and where it is going. During the last part of the afternoon session, Prof. Ishida from CICE, Hiroshima University, was a moderator and asked keynote speakers and panelists to reflect on the entire day and give a short speech about it as a wrap-up session. After the session, Prof. Ishida closed JEF, stating, "I think the importance and evidence of ECCE program in the next generation education for sustainable development were presented through all the presentations and discussions in JEF today."

Questions and Answers with Keynote Speakers

Yoko Ishida (MC)

We would like to have question and answer. We would like to invite Dr. Okengo and Dr. Hamano to go up to the stage again, and we would like you to have the Q&A session until we part for lunch. Dr. Okengo and Dr. Hamano, please go up to the stage. Thank you. Now, till 12 o'clock, we have question and answer session. We would like to take as many questions as possible from many of you. When you speak, please be brief. Please identify yourselves, your names and affiliation and then, ask questions or make comments. Now, the floor is open for questions. If you wish to raise questions, please raise your hand and the microphone will come to you. Please wait for the microphone. The person over there on the left hand, please.

Questioner 1

[Unclear] 01:18:12 for the presenters, excellent presentations! I work at the International Tropical Timber Organization which is headquartered in Yokohama, Japan. I am in charge of the outreach program. We have been providing lectures on the importance of tropical

forests and preserving the environment to schools in Japan that range from elementary schools up to universities. We have developed an educational product based on origami to teach about tropical forests, and we would like to know with whom we can partner in Japan to promote this product further and create more awareness of the importance of preserving the tropical forests, which at the end of the day also contributes to the SDGs. Thank you very much.

Takashi Hamano

Thank you for your question. Your work is amazingly important. In what way are we able to utilize the early childhood education for your work? Well, when I say early childhood education, I think it is important to pay attention to nature and the environment. Especially, they are very sensitive and this is the window where they are very sensitive for the environmental issues. Which party to team up with, that is the question I guess? In the case of Japan, we have the kindergartens attached to the universities. I think this might be taken care of in the afternoon session, but many of the Japanese universities have the kindergartens attached to them, and these kindergartens are very much forward leaning in these kinds of activities. You might want to contact them and also you will be able to learn something from their initiatives. Thank you.

Questioner 2

I am from the study group of pedagogical laws. I think raising of the self affirmation is very important. You talked about the children cutting the cabbages with the knives. I think it is important to pay attention to the safety issues. The second question is a different item. In the Japanese education, many people think about the status of the actual – the reality of the children and also the education has a guideline. The kindergarten version of the concept study, in the 2017 version, there have been some items that would not pay attention to the status of the development of the children in the Kimigayo, the national anthem. I am not quite sure whether it makes sense to familiarize them with the national anthem, Kimigayo which is in respect of the show. This show is in respect for the emperor, because they do not have the concept of the nation. What do you think about that?

Takashi Hamano

Thank you very much for your question. The first point is the use of cooking knives. Well, when I made the presentation, I was thinking of giving you some more explanation. In the Japanese kindergarten, well, maybe for the early childhood education, this is quite unique. The knives in many ways are accessible for children. We pay utmost attention to this. We make sure that many of the knives are blunt. So, it is safe, but still it is not risk-free. It is

impossible to eliminate all the risks from their lives. In that situation, if we try to be too careful, then the children will not be able to deal with the actual real-life problems. In order to raise the level of resiliency, we afford the children to have some mistakes.

The second question, well, for the national flags, the national flags of many countries are provided for the educational tools. They can familiarize themselves for many countries. That is one way of the teaching. That is how we are looking at it.

Questioner 3

Thank you for this opportunity. This is a question to both of you. In Japan, we have a close association between the kindergartens and the elementary schools. Then, in some cases, the education which is suitable for elementary school is not taking place in the elementary schools and daycare centers. Sometimes, we tend to have the higher level education coming down. That is something I am really worried about. In the past, we had the traditional way of teaching children. Dr. Hamano talked about the Japanese childhood education. There could be some conflict within yourselves. Could you tell us a bit about it? In what way are we able to deal with this? How are we able to reconcile these conflicting ideas? So, I think this is a major challenge that we face. Could you tell us a bit about it from the Japanese perspective, Dr. Hamano? Also, in Africa, development itself is not enough. It is important to make sure that the children are ready when they go into the elementary school. I am not quite sure of the early childhood education in Africa, but maybe in the urban area, the education is meant for the preparation of early childhood children for the elementary school. The education which may be suitable for elementary school is coming down to the preschool education. This might not be very good, because that might tamper with their development for early age. Could you tell us a bit about it?

Takashi Hamano

Yes, what is traditionally being taught at the elementary school is increasingly taught at the younger ages as you said. You said that the PDCA cycle is often discussed and also by the end of the early childhood, certain elements should be met. Well, such guidelines or guidance have been set by the national government. As you said in your question, this is the trend that we have been observing these days, but ECCE has its own world and the primary education has its own world. The early childhood education has its own benefits. Of course, if it is possible, it could be taken into account at the primary schools. What is being taught at the younger ages, I think could be taught and encouraged and practiced at the higher ages, and the kindergarten or the nursery school teachers and the primary school teachers should cooperate. I believe that they are cooperating, and we see an increasing trend in curriculums

that we see more coordination between these two areas. Anyway, preschool is not simply for the preparation for the preschool. Preschool is for the preparation of their lifelong learning and the lifelong development of humans. This I believe should be emphasized and understood.

Lynette Okengo

Thank you very much. The downward escalation of the curriculum is a problem across the world I think and the reasons are many. Sometimes, it is the parents who push the teachers because they want their children to read and write earlier so they can tell everybody, oh my child is only 3 but he can write. What they do not know is that that is not appropriate for that child. Sometimes the problem is because there are examinations or interviews for standard 1 and so, the teacher wants to make sure that the children are ready to go to a particular school. The situation is that. The source of the problem is varied and so, the solution must also be varied.

One of the things that some countries are doing in our region is they are sensitizing parents. They are telling parents that there are certain things that should be done by younger children. They learn through play. I really liked the video that we watched. They explore. They do not have to sit on desks. They do not have to write. That is not what they do at that age, so sensitizing the parents so that they do not create the wrong demand, but then also talking to the teachers and saying to them that they are actually causing a problem. Looking at the curriculum carefully and saying what is it that we should measure as outcome so that we are not pushing the teachers to a particular direction.

I think the other thing also is having training programs as professor said that are separate, because how the older children learn is very different, so again focusing on the training, focusing on the curriculum. I very much like also what Professor said that there must, however, be transition. The two must speak to each other so that children do not come from a play-based, happy, fun environment into a rigid classroom. It will cause problems. There must be a smooth transition that slowly gets them to where they are going to be learning in a very formal structured way in primary school.

Questioner 4

I was curious for Hamano-sensei and Dr. Okengo, what you see as the role or the value of technology in advancing access to education or to providing a platform or supporting the sustainable development goals, particularly in Africa where there is a lot of factors pushing for

the penetration of cell phones into the population. What do you think about devices, about software platforms, about other forms of technology?

Takashi Hamano

Thank you for your question. Yes, technology can be a challenge for children, and introduction of technology in our everyday life, of course, can enrich our lives and the children's lives. Digital media is often seen as simply a negative force. Some people believe that the smartphones and the games should be taken away from children, but in my opinion, technology, I think it really depends on how to use them wisely and how to best involve the parents, because it is important to enrich the children's lives and help them thrive. By deepening learning for children, technology can be helpful for children in their later lives, in their professional lives and their working lives. Thank you very much.

Lynette Okengo

Thank you. I think that is a very, very useful – I mean a really good question. Now, more than ever, we are finding that our children are stuck on little gadgets and pressing everything. They are not talking to each other. They are not moving around. They are not playing. There is a downside, but that is not to say that there is no value in having technology in these fields. There are some countries in the region that are now using technology to collect real-time data so that you are quickly able to tell what is happening where and the data is able to move very quickly to wherever the central location is for data collection. But then also within a learning environment, it is a lot about how it is being used, is it interactive? You see, if children are being asked as they play or as they watch programs even like Sesame Street or any other, is it encouraging them to interact, to think, to respond or are they sitting like zombies? I think the problem is in the use, the problem is in parents and teachers leaving the children unattended with it, but there is a lot of value in expanding children's knowledge, in exposing a new world to them, in using it to even train, because there are programs in some countries that are now adding an early childhood module that is mobile to reach many people much faster than they would have reached them in a one-to-one, face-to-face kind of arrangement. It is how it is used, I think that is the problem.

Questioner 5

I have a question to Dr. Okengo. First of all, thank you very much for coming all the way to Japan and giving us a wonderful opportunity to listen from you. I work for an international NGO called World Vision, and I work with a lot of colleagues in Africa too. My question is you said that although now more than 60% of African countries have the policies for ECDs, but of course, there are lots of challenges for implementation, and you raised about the human

resources and political will. I am just wondering how this sort of movement is perceived by the parents at the grassroots level. Do they welcome this movement or are they finding it meaningful for their child-rearing and are they understanding why it is important for them to send these young children to the nursery or whatever? If there is any role that an NGO can be any part of your team to support this movement, I would like to know.

Also, I was just reading this recent Global Education Monitoring Report which is about the migration and the refugee situation for education, and it clearly states about the importance of the ECD for also the refugee children, and as everybody knows here that in Africa, there are lots of children under emergencies. The refugee children's ECDs, how it is treated by you or in Africa, in general? Thank you.

Lynette Okengo

Thank you very much for those good questions. The truth of the matter is the parents need the service, because there are many women now joining the workforce. They find that there is a need for them to have a proper place to leave their children. The demand is actually much greater than the supply of good quality places to leave their children. The issue of whether they need it or not is not really the most critical one, because they need and we are actually finding that many parents leave their children in very dangerous places, because they have to leave them there. The question is where are they leaving their children and can they afford the kind of care that is good for their children, because many governments are not involved in the under 3 service provision. The big work to do is to design and implement programs that will make it possible for parents who have low incomes to actually find a good place to leave their children. I think the other work in convincing parents is in placing the right demand, because a lot of parents who take their children to preschools are taking them there sometimes for them to know how to read and write, etcetera and so, they place that kind of demand. The work in advocating to make sure that parents are looking for an early childhood center or program or environment that grows all aspects of the child, I think, is critical.

Refugee children, yes that is a big problem across the region, and many organizations are actually implementing different kinds of programs. Safety is a major issue in the refugee center. So, creating safe spaces where children can come and be taken care of, but while they are there, they are also learning and they are also being fed. What we have found in some context is if there is feeding going on that will definitely attract a lot of children and when the children come, then they are taken care of, they are educated, they are given opportunities to play and interact and learn from one another. There are pockets of interventions going on.

I know that UNICEF has a toolkit for ECD in emergencies. There are other programs like Save the Children that also have a peace education or something like that in emergencies. This early childhood in emergencies that is emerging, that is coming up now and the key components there are protection, feeding, and opportunities for early learning as well as the nurturing care and responsible care.

Questioner 6

I have a question to Dr. Okengo and Dr. Hamano, each one. One is for Dr. Okengo and the other one is for Hamano-sensei. For Dr. Okengo, I will go to Africa from the next week to have the research, and my research is to find out what is the high quality childhood education. I am kind of really focusing on to develop the cognitive functions, activity which can develop, for example, the executive functions. But in your lecture, I thought it is also very important to focusing on to develop nutrients, education, and also parenting education. What do you think is better to focusing on more, focusing on supporting nutrient system or supporting parent system instead of focusing on the activity like the music activity, rhythm activity for the children? This is my question.

The question to Professor Hamano, when you see the Japanese education, I think there are some things that can be applicable in the other countries or something not applicable. If you have asked those kinds of questions, I would like to hear that from you.

Lynette Okengo

Thank you very much for that good question. I will answer it by sharing the results of a study that was conducted in Jamaica where there was a home visiting program, and there were four different arms to that investigation. One group of children only received nutrition support. They were all stunted. One group received nutrition support. Another one received responsive care giving only. Another one received a combination of nutrition support and responsive care giving and then, another group received nothing and all these children are compared to a group of children who are not stunted. What the finding showed is that those children who received a combination of nutrition and responsive care giving were able to bounce back and were almost at that level of children who are not stunted. Those who received one or the other did not perform as well. The conclusion was that integrated service provision really makes the most difference. It is very difficult to choose to develop one or the other aspect, as far as possible all aspects, because they work together. They are inter-related. So, it is important that at service delivery point, children are receiving all these different services.

Takashi Hamano

First of all, this Jamaican research, it is quite a globally popular research result, not just the nutrition, but just playing with them a little bit, it would actually make a big difference. So, the importance of playing has been recognized once again. That is my interpretation of that research.

To answer your question, we receive lots of interns and trainees from Africa, and they say that they learn a lot from Japan. The education through the environment or learning through the playing and the children centered education and those theories, they take them back and try to apply in their own community. They one day go back to their country and they say there are two obstacles. One is about the resource. Even if they try to do something, they cannot have enough financial budget or resource.

Also, in ECCE in Africa, there are so many children in one class, perhaps 50 children or 100 children in one class when they provide ECCE. Unlike Japan, they may not be able to focus more on the children-centered or playing-centered, because if they have that big size of the class, it will be very difficult to conduct that education. Also in Africa, according to the country, it is a country who has this quite rigid curriculum. They have to follow that curriculum. It is not that the discretion at the teachers cannot be executed. There are those obstacles, but within the limit, they try to get something that they have learned in Japan and try to do that in Africa.

Then, some people say that they find the Japanese way of childhood education problematic. I would like to share with you one episode. We received the trainees from Africa at the university, and there were some exchanges with the students of the autonomous university, and then, in their exchange program, they made exchanges of the opinions about the early childhood education. So, as I just said, this is a discussion time between the Japanese and African students and then, in many ways, most of the opinions are raised from African students. They are more proactive. Japanese students are more reserved. Even if they are asked directly, sometimes they fall in silence and they would not answer directly to the questions. The people from Africa, they are surprised because of the fact that the Japanese education is meant for spontaneity and self-initiative, but the students at the higher education level do not have any spontaneity or the initiatives. Maybe, that is true. In early education, they try to be themselves and they try to have initiatives and then, in the later education, there could be some suppressive forces that would be applied for children. That was the comment made by the Africans.

Questioner 7

Thank you very much for inviting us here, and thank you very much for the video. It is very comprehensive and holistic. The activities are very impressive. It is an ideal preschool experience. But I have a question, what is the role of the Ministry of Health in this program? Do we have health ministry here participating with us? You had mentioned also that you are working on the 0 to 3. Briefly, what is your plan? Thank you very much.

Takashi Hamano

If the Ministry of Health, the MHLW is here, I would like him or her to answer on my behalf. No? Okay, then maybe I have to for the Japanese early childhood education, kindergarten, and nursery schools alike. As I just said, we have the kindergartens and the elementary schools. We can say that they are divided into two areas. The kindergarten is the educational facility. This is taken care of by the Ministry of Education or MEXT. This is considered to be a school, but in the case of the daycare centers, according to the current situation, it is taken care of by Ministry of Health and Labor and this is considered to be a welfare organization. This is a welfare organization for the children. For one way or the other, they are not able to receive the care by their carers. In that situation, the national government takes care of these children on their behalf. In the case of Ministry of Health, they are responsible for welfare. That is the nature of their Ministry. That means that they provide care. It focuses only on care. When I say the daycare centers, the children tend to spend longer hours at the site. That will be meant for 0 to 3. The MHLW or Ministry of Health is playing a major role for children from the ages 0 to 3. In the case of 3 to 5, what they are doing in the kindergartens and the daycare centers are very similar and the curriculum they have is very similar between the kindergartens and the nursery childcare centers. From 3 to 5, the level of care or the kind of care provided is very similar between the kindergarten and the nursery centers.

Questioner 8

Thank you very much. This is a question to Professor Hamano. He talked about the child poverty. We have the child kitchen. In the entire nation, we have children's kitchen. Could you tell us a bit about the roles and possibilities of this children's kitchen? Many of the parents might sometimes have difficulty having good relations between themselves. This is a private initiative to provide support for these parents and children. What are some of the possibilities and what are the limitations of them?

Takashi Hamano

Thank you very much. The issue of the poverty is very important and this is one of the

themes that I really wanted to take up in today's forum and thank you very much for your question on that issue. About the Kodomo-Shokudo or the children's kitchen, this has been taken care of in many parts of the country and this is gaining momentum and this is to provide food for the children or meals for children. This is not only for the provision of meals, but also at the same time, this is to provide the place where they are able to come. That means that they are able to feel accepted and also this is a place where they are able to stay for a while. That means that they feel comfortable. That would have a major potential for children without the necessary support from their parents.

I have been talking about the development in childhood and this is not only for the intellectual, but rather this is comprehensive and holistic especially for the early childhood and early elementary school age. Receiving the meals, the support is important and also the place to be. That means that they are able to feel the stability, because they are able to stay in one place, in certain places for comfort, but there are some bad news, because if they go to a child kitchen or the restaurant, then that would be a source of bullying. That child is eating food at the child kitchen, then the people would pick on them. In Japanese society, people tend to be homogenous. The ordinary children have meals with their families and if they are not able to eat at their families, then they do not want the others to see them as different. Some of the schools ban the existence of the child kitchen. I think it is important to pay attention to the context. We are not able to say that this is considered to be a good approach. That is how we are looking at it because of its limitation.

Questioner 9

Dr. Okengo, Professor Hamano, thank you very much. I am from OMEP, a UNESCO registered NGO in Japan. ONEP is an organization for young children in the world. My name is Kamigaichi. This question is not institutional, but I am interested in the contents of ESD, SDGs are how practically reflected in the curriculum. For example, since 2017, the early childhood curriculum has been renewed in Japan. The education minister, Mr. Shimamura said to its advisory committee that the SDG should be reflected in the process of revision of the curriculum standards for the Japanese teachers. Would you please shed light on this? And also Dr. Okengo, in Africa in the early childhood care and development, sustainable development, is it a factor that has been practically reflected in the curriculum of early childhood? And also the nursery teachers and the kindergarten teachers, how do you think they are actually practicing these sustainable development or SDG goals in their daily practice when they teach and guide young children?

Takashi Hamano

It is indeed a very important subject matter for today. We are now at a meeting, Japan Educational Forum for SDGs. You have touched the core of what we have been discussing today and you are interested in the contents of the ECCE in Japan, how does it reflect the SDGs. Early on in my presentation, I said that the Japanese early childhood education originally has been covering many aspects of SDGs. Through early childhood education, children can unlock their potentials which would help reduce the poverty and help children, employment later in their life and this also improves other aspects including their health. I am sure about this. If there is a program of ECCE, then that itself has been making a contribution for us to achieve SDGs. At the more microscopic level, if you look at the curriculum for early childhood, well, how does it reflect SDGs or sustainable development? In Japan at least, the learning through the environment, this has been a traditional value in my opinion. Of course, technology and new media as was mentioned, of course are very important. They also have great potential, but directly touching the environment, nature is all the more important for children to develop and unlock their potential.

Lynette Okengo

Thank you very much. Across the region, there is growing realization of the critical role that the early year is playing in achieving all of the SDGs. Be it education, be it gender inequality, be it peace, be it in alleviating poverty, the early years play a critical role. In fact, I think it was about five or so years ago when the biggest message used to be that let us support early childhood to break the vicious cycle of poverty. There is a growing realization. Of course, there is much, much more that needs to be done, but increasingly, many governments are seeing investing in the early years will make a difference. Well, what many advocates will say and what governments will say has got to be backed by action. That is what is really remaining and a lot needs to be done. People are saying a lot, but much more needs to be done. In terms of the curriculum for the countries that I have seen reviewing curriculum, there is increased attention to include peace, to include issues of the environment, to be gender sensitive, gender responsive. To a certain extent, there is a way in which the vision of the curriculums or the curricula is taking on board these emerging issues. Of course, there is a lot more that needs to be done, however.

Questioner 10

Global Link Management consultant, my name is Yuki. Thank you very much for your speeches. Professor Hamano, I have a question. As Dr. Okengo stressed, the monitoring using data is going to be more important with limited resources facing the huge challenges in order to meet SDGs. Professor Hamano emphasized the quality of early childhood education and you analyzed the result of the academic achievement conducted nationwide by

MEXT in Japan. Particularly, you said that the early childhood enrolment is lower in 0 to 2 year olds in Japan in comparison with OECD. My child experienced the daycare from age 0, but at the age of 6th grade, have you observed any impact on academic achievement or the performance at school from their enrolment or non-enrolment in early childhood education, because if we can be clear about that, then our support or cooperation with Africa would be more effective with the limited financial and manpower resources. There are many gadgets and technologies and hardware, but we might need to shift our resources to more soft side like supporting the education of teachers or the professional development. I am sorry for the long question, but I appreciate your insight that might be helpful for Africa.

Takashi Hamano

Thank you very much. We conducted this national research on the achievement level of the children for grade 6 and also the 3rd grade in middle school, and we conduct this almost every year under the guidance of MEXT, but this is not the follow-up research. It is just data we got at that specific time point. We get the result from the answers of the 6th grader and their parents. From the answer to the questionnaires, we make analysis. To overcome poverty, so even in the poor environment, they have a higher achievement level. They have a higher non-cognitive skill and if the parents find good things about the children and teach them the importance of completing the things, they have a higher non-cognitive skill for the children. The children who have gone to the nursery school or the kindergarten, whether they have a higher achievement or not, we actually conducted that research once and the children who went to the kindergarten, they have a higher achievement level, but we actually have not incorporated any other variable. We cannot see any causality there.

For the OECD, research result had also been analyzed and this is not about our national achievement level, but according to the result of OECD PISA, the children who receive a longer early childhood education, they get higher score. That is the result. As you have said from now on, we would like to have the data of monitoring and evidence, but at the current level, we can only analyze on the limited data. In the future, I am sure we have to build our evidence based on data, strongly. What we are doing in Japan, how will it be giving a positive impact to Africa, it has not been decided by us. But I think the people from Africa actually come to Japan and see what we are doing and we ask them to judge whether that is useful for them or not.

Yoko Ishida (MC)

Okay, thank you very much. With this, we would like to conclude the morning session. Dr. Okengo and Professor Hamano, thank you very much and also thank you very much for many questions from the floor. Please give our speakers a big round of applause and please go

back to your seat. Thank you. Two keynote speakers, they would also be attending on the Q&A sessions after the panel discussions in the afternoon and there are some housekeeping announcements. The afternoon session starts from 1:30. Please come back to this room around 10 minutes before the time that we start and if you have any questions about the lunch place, please ask the reception people. For the simultaneous receiver please keep them and if you are leaving, please return them at the reception. Also, there is the questionnaire including on the distributed document. If possible please fill them in and please also return to the reception. Also, there was some person who questioned about the global monitoring report. There is an excerpt version of the Japanese translation for this year and it is on the reception desk. If you are interested, please take a look. With that, we would like to conclude the morning session. Thank you very much.

Open Floor Discussions, Questions and Answers

Yoko Ishida (MC)

Thank you very much for your cooperation, and now, we would like to get into the open floor discussions, questions, and answers. During the break, we have received your questions, and it has actually been given to the panelists and the keynote speakers, and some of them have already read that through. We actually handed those questions and comments to them already. For this questions and answers session, we would like to ask Professor Mathias Urban to moderate and facilitate. Professor Urban, would you like to take the microphone?

Mathias Urban

Thank you. This is an opportunity to actually discuss some of the issues that have come up during the day, and there are some questions that might sort of lead us into the discussion. I suppose one of the questions that might get us started into the discussion is a question towards Dr. Okengo, but also to probably all of us in a way, the question about moving from the conceptual and political framing to the actual needs of children and families in countries other than Japan and how these needs are identified, how they are met and in this context for instance, does it still make sense to keep up this conceptual distinction between education and care and development. I suppose I would like Lynette Okengo to actually start on this, give us an insight into your practice.

Lynette Okengo

Thank you very much. The presentation in the morning was largely around enabling environment, what is happening at the policy level, what is happening with the work that departments are doing. But there is quite a bit that is happening in terms of practice that I

did not touch on. The question here is how are the needs identified and how are they met. What normally happens in most countries in our region, at the national level for programs that are supported by government, a strategic planning exercise will take place, and there will be several consultative meetings with key stakeholders. They will identify what are the key issues that need to be addressed and sometimes that process leads to the development of curriculum. At the national level, that is how that will happen, but at the community level, there is community dialog that takes place in various communities where parents will air their views and ideas will be floated and they will be prioritized and then, designs of programs will come up. If you were to walk into a typical early childhood program for children between 4 and 6, unfortunately typically what you would see is a very kind of teacher-centered environment where children are repeating a lot after the teacher, they are sitting on the desks and they are writing a lot. In very few cases will you find developmentally appropriate practice, although that is changing in some communities. I do not know to what extent you would like me to go into the actual practice in the classroom, but roughly that is the situation.

Mathias Urban

I suppose maybe it would be interesting to hear something about the actual practice and how that connects to this question of how do we meet the needs, how do we identify them, and how do we respond to them actually in the daily interaction with children.

Lynette Okengo

Okay, so if we can begin with the youngest children, for children under 3, typically what is happening is particularly also with the launch of the Nurturing Care Framework, many parents will bring their children to the hospitals for immunizations or for anything else, and during that time, the nutritionist or the nurse will be talking to the mothers about, as you breastfeed talk to your child, smile, play with your child and they will provide examples and they will have a card on the desk, and they will show them pictures and use that as an opportunity to interact with them, ask if they have any issues, and they will troubleshoot together. That will typically be happening in a hospital environment for children under 3.

Sometimes you will find home visiting programs where community health workers then will go into the homes and they will start off with an open question, do you have any issues about raising your child and that will open a discussion. In some programs, it is unstructured, but in others, it is very structured, and there is a curriculum where they begin with the feeding and your child is under 3, how do you play with your child and they will show what they do and the home visitor will provide some advice.

For the children that are between 3 and that are younger than 3, typically if it is a setup, an institution, they will have one teacher to maybe around 20 or thereabout children. Like I mentioned, there would be a classroom setup. They would be sitting on desks or maybe playing on the mat if they are younger, and the teacher will be going through particular areas. So, there would be health, there would be nutrition, there would be the number work, there would be the language, and there would be chats all over the classroom. Children will be drawing, coloring, plasticine molding, but the older ones, it is definitely much, much more academic.

Mathias Urban

Maybe we should pass that question on to some of the other international speakers. I was just looking at Mr. Priyono. Maybe we could sort of have an insight into this question, how are parents', families', children's, and communities' needs actually identified and how does that play out in practice, how are these needs met in day-to-day programs and practices.

Dwi Priyono

Thank you, Mathias. I have two questions relating with a child. The first question is how important is a role of local community in ECD or pre-primary education and then, the second question is, in Japan, a child should be raised by mother to the 0 year and I believe up to 3 years. This paranoia, I mean the paranoia of mother to work outside, what is the situation in your country based in? To answer the first question, the role of local community in ECD is very, very important. In Indonesia case, local communities play an important role in ECD. Along with the government, they act as provider of ECD services. You might have observed in my presentation, there are 91,095 kindergartens and only 3.8% are owned by government, while 96.2% are community based. Moreover, playgroups, daycare center, and other similar centers are provided by local community. The answer of the second question, ideally 0 to 3 year old children are supposed to be taken care of by their mother. However, because of economic condition, in my country, Indonesia I mean as well as Southeast Asia region, it is quite challenging. Many mothers must go to work to support their family. Especially, this condition happens in urban area. Thank you very much.

Mathias Urban

Thank you. Maybe we should try and make a connection between these perspectives and maybe give Professor Hamano the chance to respond to this question of identifying needs, meeting needs, and how that is systematically supported in Japanese context and maybe you can make a connection to what you have just heard from the context of Africa or the context of Indonesia.

Takashi Hamano

Thank you very much. In what way are we able to satisfy the needs of the parents? In the field of the early childhood education, we place emphasis with the communication with the parents or carers, and we make sure that we have meetings and also we make home visits and also we have notes or maybe the diaries. The care providers would write their notes or the diaries of their lives during the day and then, this notebook would go to the parents and then, the parents would write about their life at nighttime and then, this will be fed back to the kindergarten or the daycare center. This way, we are able to identify some of the needs and requirements of the parents, so it is possible to understand the demand of the carers or the parents. This kind of communication is quite frequent. Sometimes the feedback would be given. The request is made and then, the feedback is given to them.

About the question raised, mothers, so it is considered that it is a norm for the mothers to take care of their children till the age of 3. Well, actually I talked about the daycare centers. Many of the children who need to have care during the day would be taken care by the daycare centers. So, the primary visit for the children to go into the daycare centers is that their parents would have to be in lack of the capacity or availability to take care of their children. That is the reason why the children in the daycare centers are the ones who lack the parental care. That means that needs should be high. To a certain extent, some people may think that it is better to nurture children at home, but still there are increasing needs for the daycare centers. The situation here in Japan is changing and there is a long waiting list of young children whose parents want their children to be accepted by the daycare centers, but cannot. That is all.

Mathias Urban

I was wondering whether Dr. Chen, you would like to add something from your perspective in terms of this broad area of identifying, meeting, responding to parents' needs and how that plays out in practice in your context in Singapore, and then, maybe move on to something to a slightly different angle.

Christine Chen

Okay, in terms of identifying parents' needs, this parental involvement is actually embedded in the accreditation framework that we have. The centers who are accredited will have with them – they would be practicing involving parents. In the same way, the roles of local community to be accredited, you must be reaching out to the community like for example, the health promotion board, the library, social services that are offered, so that is how Singapore

has approached this idea of needs' assessment through involving parents and through working with the community all embedded in the framework.

At the moment, the government is focusing on families who are facing difficulties. In Singapore, we have about 94% or 95% of families owning their apartments or houses. There is about maybe 5% who are not owning, who do not have an apartment. They do not buy an apartment, but they are renting. We call this the rental flats and the government knows exactly where they are and intervention will be at these rental flats in a special program called KidSTART. A lot of money is being pumped into these areas to help the children from inception. That means at the hospital and then, home visit for the first year and then, from first to 3 years, playgroup intervention and then, from 3 to 6, there will be intervention at the childcare centers. That is how I think Singapore is approaching the two issues that we have been discussing.

Mathias Urban

That is probably an interesting and very relevant point and maybe I can put this to all of the panelists and speakers. Maybe I am sort of exaggerating, but we sometimes tend to talk about parents' needs or communities' needs as if there was some, this thing as the universal parent. You just mentioned a targeted approach to looking at a very specific community within the broader context. Maybe there is a question about another general approach that we need to identify and respond to parents' needs to actually ask ourselves, whose parents' needs, are we actually reaching all parents or there are parts of communities that are not being invited into the process and how do we make sure that families and communities that might not be vocal enough to actually express their needs are being part and have their rights to education met. I am not sure who would like to address that. But the question of moving from this sort of universal idea that we can identify as experts, what the needs are to actually making sure that there is and the act of participation of every family and every child in defining this and how would we approach that, how are your approaches to it? Who would like to take that up?

Christine Chen

While everybody else is thinking, maybe I could add another point. Besides this strategic intervention in the rental flats, pockets of areas, the other need identified is I was just discussing with one of the participants about children coming from non-English speaking homes. You know Singapore is multicultural. You do have children coming from Malay homes, Indian homes, and Chinese homes that will speak their mother tongue and they are not so familiar with English, but yet English is the language of the school. We have these

children who at preschool are struggling with the English language and also intervention is with these children, I think at the moment. Singapore is very small. We have about 5000 of these children, and we have early literacy teachers that would go to the preschool every day. We have 400 teachers and actually, our association is preparing these teachers to go into the 500 preschools every day to help this group of children. This is the Ministry of Education program and fully funded by the Ministry of Education. The other program that I spoke about is funded by the Early Childhood Development Agency. We have different departments working on different issues.

Lynette Okengo

For many countries, we do not have what we would call a national, for example, parenting program and so you would not have a national mechanism for assessing the needs of the parents. But wherever there are partners that want to work in specific communities, typically, they would go into a community, gather the parents together in a number of meetings, not just one meeting to find out what are the issues they are facing as they bring up their children, and a range of issues will come up. I remember in one program where it was an informal settlement, and we gathered all the mothers together to see what are the issues you are facing in bringing up your children, and they brought all kinds of issues including the economic lack of resources, lack of a clean playing field, there are no trained people in the community who are willing to work, a lot of issues come up and then, you sit with them through a prioritization process, you identify a few issues and then, you say what if we were to come up with this kind of program.

In this program, I am talking about in the informal settlement, the mother said we all have to wake up and go and work. We have nowhere to leave our 3 and under children, and we said how would you want us to think about solving this? They said if one mother would agree to stay as the rest of us go to work and then, we pay this mother, it might be helpful. Then, you ask questions like how will the children eat or we can all contribute money, you see so you work with them to identify problems and identify solutions and package that into a program, but that is very, very specific to a community. At national level, it is a little bit different, and I have not come across a national level parenting program except what is happening through the hospitals.

Mathias Urban

Maybe we can focus a bit more on this, and I am going to just ask a question that we struggle a lot within the European context, including the country where I live and work at the moment, in increasingly diverse societies, quite often the specific lens on minority communities and

marginalized communities is one of deficit, is one of needs being defined externally by somebody else and quite often the response to that definition of the needs of, let us say, a Roma community in Europe or an Irish Travelers community in Ireland, quite often the response to that externally defined need is one of education needs to enable these people to become like us. It is an assimilation sort of agenda. It is not called an assimilation agenda, but quite often this is the intention behind that, creating all sorts of difficulties, not least a lot of resistance from people who are rightfully, probably afraid that they are losing their identity in all this. What are your experiences and your responses to this in the context of Singapore, of Indonesia, of the African network? Who would like to jump in?

Lynette Okengo

I remember the time that children's rights was a big issue. People would go around the communities to say this is a child's right, this is what you must do, and the natural response would be you are shifting the power from the parents to the children and that is not the way we do things here. There would be a resistance, and I think it is as the result of things like this or even for example, getting into a community and saying we think you need sanitation facilities and the community would say, that is not even the most important thing for us. We actually need a fence to keep us safe or something like that. It is incidences like this that have caused organizations to ask themselves which is the best way to do this, because you will build them sanitation facilities and like in one community, they actually locked them up and said these ones are special ones for you. The next time you come visiting, this is what you will use, and they did not see it as meeting their own needs. So, we have found it very valuable to sit down and have conversations with the community, let them identify which is their most urgent need and then, they give solutions to how their needs will be met. But like you said earlier, their needs are diverse. There is not one set of parents and one way of meeting their needs. So, this differs community to community, sometimes even to the smaller level of a group of households. All the time, there needs to be continuous dialog and even when programs are designed, there needs to be a system of finding out are we still on track, are we still relevant.

Dwi Priyono

In Indonesia, we have a permanent body who is taking parenting education. This directly answers many issues related with the parenting methods in general. It also works very closely with Early Childhood Care and Education. Maybe this information becomes a good practice which can be considered in this forum. Thank you very much.

Christine Chen

First, I would like to add on to what Lynette has said about the child's rights. I do agree that we come in and say for the rights of the child, we need to do this and then, you disempower the parents. What I found was a softer touch that would melt the hearts of parents or teachers instead. How can we help the child to achieve his potential? Every child is born with immense potential. How can we help the child? I think that would go softer than the child has the right to education.

In terms of diversity, actually in Singapore, only about 50% of the population is really Singaporean, maybe even less, but then the others are people who came in and applied for permanent residence and all that. So, it is again now like a melting pot where people come from the region and settle in Singapore. I think the most challenging is when you have a Singaporean married to a Vietnamese or from Myanmar or from Indonesia. That is kind of challenging which affects the child, because at home, there will be two languages and not necessarily be English which is the language of the school. How then can the teachers in the early childhood setting deal with this issue? Very recently, I was doing a workshop in subtle things like being vegetarian and non-vegetarian. In a family, the mother is vegetarian. The father is not. The mother is saying now, how do I accommodate this? I have to feed myself vegetarian food. My husband is not vegetarian. The children are not vegetarian. So, when you talk about diversity, it is not only diversity of communities. Even within the family or in terms of religion, one mother may be Christian, the other one might be Hindu. Yes, somebody was saying, I am not Christian, but my wife is. I am Hindu. Again you know, within the family unit, the children are exposed to differences. It is quite challenging when we have young children coming from such households.

Mathias Urban

I am always sort of reluctant to use that concept, the melting pot in a way, because it assumes that things just melt into each other. But as we all know, if we look into the actual melting pot, some pieces, they always swim to the surface and others sink. So, there is always an issue of inequality. I think it provides a real challenge for the governance of such a complex system like Early Child Development and Early Child Education Programs, and I suppose this is one of the key challenges at the level of governance to develop approaches that actually allow for resourcing, regulating, governing systems that need to actually start with what Lynette Okengo said, actually conversations locally about what are the issues, what issues are you facing as a family, as a community and that is a real challenge, because quite often policymakers and our approaches to policymaking are not prepared for this.

We still sometimes live in this fantasy land of top-down implementation of large-scale

programs. We have very little instruments to actually learn from these local conversations that we heard and feed them back into the policy making process at national level. I suppose that is a huge area for shared learning across countries, because the more we realize the complexity of these issues and of societies, the more we need to develop approaches to actually governing complexity rather than sort of governing through regulation. I do not think anybody has the solution to that which is another strong argument for the continued conversation about this and a conversation in early childhood, not just between early childhood practitioners, about the best way to develop and deliver programs, but also about a shared conversation across countries at the level of administration, at the level of policymaking, at various levels of government – local, regional, national about developing these approaches to dealing with uncertainty and complexity in modern societies.

I have another set of questions here that are more sort of about the current Japanese context and maybe we could zoom in on into some of the current issues arising from the broader discussion in the Japanese context. There are questions about the current Japanese curriculum and positions around that. Maybe it is a question to Ms. Takaoka. It is a question to also Ms. Nakamura and to Professor about the appropriateness maybe, the possibilities of the current curricular situation in Japan and probably questions for development, where to go from here, from your perspective. Who would like to start?

Takashi Hamano

In Japan, we use a lot of words as curriculum management meaning curriculum is something not to be decided by the country, but in each center, they would manage the curriculum and in order to manage the curriculum not just by the staff of the center, but we have to include the parents and the communities. We have been discussing about the parenting community demands or needs, how we should identify the very important factor that we have to look after, but on the other hand, I would like to add that the needs of the parents are quite diversified as it was said and the situation of the children is also diversified or the parents need may not sometimes necessarily be correct, because there are some parents who only care about their own children. In such cases, for those parents who talk out loud, they only would like to wish the betterness of their own children, but rather we need to focus on those parents or children who are not good to voice up or even though if they would like to talk out loud, they are not in the position to say out loud, and we need to actually identify the needs of such types of parents and family.

Our ultimate goal is not to meet the needs of the parents, but we need to focus more on the children and I think the characteristics of the Japanese education. So, what is best for the

children is something that we have to always keep in mind. In Japan, at the moment, the kindergarten and the nursery schools will be free of charge, and I think it was one of the questions, and we are trying to integrate the curriculum. Until the end of the ECCE period, we have this ideal way and in terms of the curriculum regardless of the kindergarten or nursery school, it was the same curriculum and they can actually receive the education and we are about to realize that situation. The rest is that each center or each institution, how they can properly manage the curriculum with their own say maybe through the PDCA cycle, the plan, do, evaluate and actually make an action. I think that is the current Japanese trend. I think I would like to rely on Ms. Nakamura who is actually in the kindergarten. She is more close to what is going on in reality.

Keiko Nakamura

Okay, thank you very much. I only know about the actual sites, but as you said, we need to think first about the children. In our kindergarten, we try to focus whether the children can play fully, and we are conducting the training within our kindergarten that all the staff can attend, and we try to identify on the episodes that the children are experiencing and verifying those. By that, we try to improve or change, we revise the curriculum, and we try to find out about any support that we need or to think about the environmental structure.

Having said that, we also need to consider about the parents' needs and the social or the local communities' needs. So, several times a year, we actually conduct the parent survey or questionnaire, and the items that we ask them is what do you think about your children, are they playing fully or just about the contents of the curriculum, about how the staff or the teachers are corresponding or responding to the children, so those kind of variety of the questions have been asked to the parents and made them evaluate, and we analyze and we try to improve. We also self evaluate ourselves. All the staff and teachers, we actually look back on what we have done and try to present that.

Also, in our prefecture, in Hiroshima prefecture, we try to connect the kindergarten and the elementary school. We are working on it. From the elementary school perspective, what do they think about the kindergarten education? Whether the children actually are growing as we wish? We are using the rubric to analyze at the moment, but there are some cultural differences. We cannot numerically measure the ECCE, and it is very difficult to actually conduct interview session to the children. Also, some of the parents do not know quite well about their children. With rubric, we try to connect the kindergarten and the elementary school, but it is actually difficult in reality. As much as possible, we are making improvement on the curriculum. That is what we are doing. Thank you.

Junko Takaoka

I am also not in the actual institution or center, but when we conduct survey to the parents, they actually highly evaluate on the Japanese education for the preschool children, as a result. Also, as I mentioned in my presentation, they are focusing more on living in the family and also the kindergarten. So, the kindergarten's role to the children's development is getting more important. How we can provide a high quality curriculum is very important. However, we also feel that the needs of the parents might not necessarily be reflecting on the quality curriculum. They are not wanting to have the quality curriculum.

As Ms. Nakamura mentioned, there are more of the short-term results that they are looking for with short-term effects. Maybe for those long terms, not visible, but more important and power cannot be understood fully as a matter of fact. The number of children per family is declining, but especially in the urban areas, there is a waiting list for the parents who wish to put their children into the kindergartens or the daycare centers and nurseries. But the situation will change in which the parents will choose the daycare centers or nurseries or kindergartens. In that situation, we would like them to choose high quality ECCE centers. If not, Japanese education would fail. At this point, we would like the parents and also their teachers and the care workers to understand what kind of care is needed, what kind of education makes sense.

Mathias Urban

The chief guest lists have my name on them. I suppose maybe I should just say something. There is a question and I think they are connected. There is a question about one of the slides in my presentation where I talk about the situation in Europe, about an increased forced migration into Europe, refugees arriving in Europe from countries like Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan. The question is, are you concerned or would you consider sending messages about stopping weapon trades from the US, from Japan, from European countries, I suppose. Is that part of the picture? The second question is one about the unification of early childhood education programs. I would like to take that together.

What we are experiencing in Europe, but also in many other parts of the world is a social picture that is the result of political choices and sometimes very fundamental and dramatic choices about war and peace that forces families to make decisions. No family crosses the Mediterranean Sea in a rubber dinghy just for fun. No family tries or no child tries to desperately move from France to the United Kingdom hanging from the bottom of a truck.

So, there are political choices that lead to realities. We are not as early childhood educators through early childhood programs going to have an impact or an influence on these macro-political questions. But I suppose these questions require a positioning to say, actually this is not just happening around us and oh look, there is children arriving from all these interesting countries, but to realize that this is happening for a reason and that we as educators need to take a stand and position ourselves, are we okay with our countries exporting weapons to these countries, are we okay with our policymakers building walls around our countries and preventing migration in a way. I suppose this is a question that goes beyond immediate early childhood development, education, and care practice, but it goes to the heart of each one of us as a professional, as an academic, as a policymaker how do I position myself in all this and how do I voice that position.

As a result of all this and this again closer to home to what we are discussing here, the question about sort of, it is articulate as the unification of early childhood education and care. I suppose one of the critical issues arising from these fairly dramatic situations we are experiencing all over the world is that it is no longer sufficient to talk about separate approaches to early childhood development programs, to education programs, to child care as three separate things. We heard about this quite a lot in all the presentations, but sometimes, especially in the so-called developed countries, we do not have the policy framework for this. We do not have a policy framework to integrate a very hands-on support for children who are suffering from disadvantageous conditions in connection with high quality education, in connection with reliable care for families. I suppose this is going to be the next big question, especially for the region where I am based in Europe to actually recognize that we have to move to a much more integrated approach between early childhood development, education, and care and that in order to do that, we need to pay a lot more attention to initiatives that are as we speak being developed and practiced in other regions of the world, in Asia, in Africa, in Latin-America and learn across these regions.

Suppose the political question and the consequences of political choices and the reality of children and families are connected and it is so, the professional in a way becomes a political question in all this. We have 10 minutes left. That is brilliant and I am just wondering, looking at the audience, are there any questions that we have not addressed so far on this panel? Are there any urgent questions that have come up? You are listening to the contributions from the panelists. Is there anything that you would like to sort of bring to the panel, questions that need asking? We have time for this. We have the microphone. If that is not the case, then maybe what we could do is - we have a question.

Question 1(The floor)

I have a dilemma. We have two tasks regarding the whole area of early childhood development. One is, we need the resources, we have to mobilize, we have to advocate, we have to convince agencies, governments and then, there is the other issue of capacity. I am very much taken by what was today presented by Christine, the details of how to train. How do we balance out that and how do all of us take advantage of such knowledge, such information, such research, because we have also the urge for advocacy promotion? These are two areas where we have to do balance and we have cultures, we have roots, but at the end, we want a global change. I am addressing to anybody who can answer this question. Thank you.

Lynette Okengo

I think in supporting children's development, the common thing has been to look at the different spheres of influence in a child's life. At the very center is the child and the child's own development. Next to the child are the parents and other caregivers. Next to the caregivers are the societies and where services are provided, the nurses, the doctors and so on. Next to that we have our communities and then, our policies. Using the ecological model, we might not have a choice to choose which sphere of influence to focus on, because these things work together. I mean if we are looking at large scale provision of early childhood programs, not run away from advocacy and policy and then, we cannot dwell on advocacy and policy only because it does not talk about the service that the child needs. The ideal situation would be to intervene in all those spheres of influence. What is the immediate environment for? You know one of the questions that were raised earlier was the issue of inclusive education, what are the needs of that child, what service needs to be provided, how we capacitate the parents, how we capacitate the service provider, how we ensure that policy takes care and provide a safety net. We really cannot run away from intervening at all the spheres of influence.

Christine Chen

Well, I agree with you that we have to intervene in all the spheres. But I think policy structures influence a lot. For example, the way they organized the birth to 3, the question from Japan said that most of the children from birth to 3 are taken care by mothers. In Singapore, there is a move towards putting the children in infant care which is part of child care. Children are really kind of institutionalized very, very young. And I sometimes wonder on what basis do they divide the young child based on 2 months, they start at 2 months, because the mother gets vacation leave for 2 months. They start at 2 months to 18 months, 18 months to 30 months, and 30 months to 36 months. Sometimes I wonder on what basis

do they do that and because the structure is such that children are organized that way, it really makes it very difficult for practitioners to practice. Sometimes I am not in policy. Sometimes what we can do is just advocate. What I advocated for children birth to 3 was just go to the executive director of the agency and say okay, you will be now more in charge of children birth to 3, so what plans do you have for teachers of children birth to 3 and what kind of programs do you want to see, because there is a tendency for birth to 3 program to be a pushdown program from the 4 to 6. I showed them the programs and miniature [ph] 02:39:12 and all that. That is all we practitioners really can do in terms of working at the policy level. Maybe some of you can give us ideas as to how do we really make impact at the policy level.

Mathias Urban

Maybe one of the things that is needed is a shift of the discussion from how can we ask advocates, professionals, practitioners make an impact on the policy process, but how can we actually create spaces for discussion and dialog and conversation with policymakers and how can we create these spaces where policymakers themselves can actually learn from each other at local, regional, national, and international level. I suppose the more context like the G20 recognize the complex and systemic nature of what we are talking about, the more there might be an opportunity for governments and maybe this is something that Japan could actually actively promote to create and initiate and support these learning spaces of all stakeholders involved, not just sort of the early childhood experts, but the policymakers who are involved in this and to discuss and come up with new solutions and new ideas for governing complex systems.

We have come to the end of the day. I suppose from my position at the moment, all I can do is thank the panel for all your contributions and for responding to the questions and explaining them. I would like to thank the audience for your questions and for your involvement in all this and obviously a great thank you goes to the organizers to making this day happen today and to initiate this conversation which I suppose will not be the last opportunity to move this discussion on. Thank you very much.

Yoko Ishida (MC)

Thank you very much, Professor Urban as the moderator and also all the speakers, keynote speakers, and the panel discussants including theorists, the practitioners and the policymakers from Asia, from Africa. Thank you very much indeed for your valuable contributions from all different perspectives and backgrounds.

Wrap-up Session

Yoko Ishida (MC)

I would like to go on to our summary discussion time. Well, the wrap-up session is not intended to draw certain conclusions or find certain convergence. We would like to first invite the experts on the stage to give us the final statements for 3 minutes starting with Mr. Dwi Priyono and all the way on the seats they are arranged on the stage and first, the panelists and then, Professor Urban and then, the two keynote speakers expressing your important take-aways and the observations and so on. So, first Mr. Dwi Priyono, please.

Dwi Priyono

Thank you very much, Yoko. In my belief, building a strong and wealthy country begins with building its community and strong community starts with early child. In this matter, early childhood development must be among the top priorities in every country. Thank you very much.

Keiko Nakamura

Thank you very much indeed for this opportunity. The Hiroshima University kindergarten is a standalone kindergarten so to speak, but now, I was able to discuss with you from the global perspective. We provide the care and education through play, through nature and environment, particularly the forests that we have in the backyard. But as said the needs of the parents, needs of the local community, of course sometimes they include the expectations, the people expected us to teach what the primary school used to teach, but instead we believe that ensuring the opportunity of play is the primary role that the ECCE should provide and they provide the solid foundation for young children to develop and thrive. Later on with the SDGs and the ECD in mind, we were able to discuss and learn from each other and we would like to continue providing quality education. Thank you very much.

Christine Chen

Well, I do not come to Japan often and this is really an opportunity to learn more about your system and your policies and I have never been to Africa. Again, I have learned from Lynette what is happening there. I have never been to Dublin. I have been to Indonesia, because we are so close, but this is really an opportunity for me to learn about others. I think what is heartwarming is that all of us are singing the same tune that we want to advocate for early childhood development and what I am hearing is an integrated early childhood development system. This is a beginning and not the end.

Junko Takaoka

Thank you very much. In order to make the richer future of the children what we can do is the perspective that we are working on and even with a different background, whether we are from the government or in the practical level, we were able to make a very good discussion. There is also more and more diversity within the local community or even within the family. I know that to guarantee the healthy growth of the children, what we need to do is something that would lead from what we have discussed today. Also, we need to actually make them into action and it is very difficult, but that is what I have learned today. Thank you.

Lynette Okengo

Thank you. I think we may all be familiar with the saying that you strike when the iron is hot. For early childhood that iron is really hot now. With the G20 getting behind the early childhood agenda, with governments now beginning to talk about policies, etcetera, this is the moment for early childhood advocates to ride on that wave. So, this is the time for all of us to get energized, to get behind the agenda in our different capacities. We need policymakers, practitioners, teachers, and community members. Everybody has a unique role. Everybody needs to be very activated in playing the role. I must say that Japan is at this special moment when the wave is high, and it is the leadership of Japan that is going to really help a lot of countries get behind this agenda. We are very excited that Japan is keen on this, is carrying forward the mantle from Argentina, and we are saying keep going, we are here. We are willing to continue these conversations in our countries, because this is the time the iron is hot. Let us not slack. Let us keep going.

Takashi Hamano

Today, I think our biggest topic was the SDGs, so the ECCE for achieving SDGs. When we look back at the SDGs, nobody should be left behind and that is the basic principle. We also have to consider about the inclusiveness as well. In the world of ECCE, it also applies. In ECCE, we should be inclusive and nobody should be left behind and that strong message was able to be driven from today. Those children from 3 to 5 at the moment and 15 years from now, they will be the leader of the society. Maybe they are the main players to create the sustainable world, and we are actually creating the principal foundation for the power, the energy, and the skill to emphasize the others and to love and care the others.

When I was listening to the presentation of the other presenters, there are some points that I kept in my mind that I would like to share with you. Most of you actually had quoted from Heckman for the importance of ECCE. Of course, Heckman had achieved great things. However, he is an economist. He would actually see things from economical perspective,

but the children, they are not existing for the economic growth nor for the development. They are the actual right holders. Each child's right should actually be cherished and cared and respected.

Professor Dr. Okengo mentioned about the spirituality. For the development of the children, there is a cognitive area and non-cognitive area, and I think you mentioned about the spirituality or spiritual growth, because when we talk about the children's development in Japan, we do not actually mention about the spiritual development. Maybe we, Japanese tend to miss those, but when we talk about the sustainable development, spirituality is very critical. Ms. Nakamura mentioned that we actually connect to the forest. It is something that you are connecting with something beyond.

Also, Professor Urban mentioned who will define the quality. That was something that I kept in my mind. Also, Dr. Chen had shown the video and showed us the perspective from the children's view and how the adults around should actually interpret on what they would like to do. Who will evaluate that quality or define the quality? Does that reside within the children or who would see it? I think that is what we need to consider. Also, in the environment where everybody can play together, I think we can actually create the experiences of childhood. I think I am getting long, but I am very happy to have a very fruitful discussion today and I had a very good learning. Thank you.

Mathias Urban

Well, I suppose we are at a crucial time. Let us just recognize for a moment that early childhood has become a global success story in a way. For the last 20 years, early childhood has got on to all the important policy agendas, on to electoral agendas. That is something to recognize and I think we should all as the global early childhood development and education care community sometimes take a moment to actually recognize what we have achieved. At the same time, now is not the time for complacency as we have seen the situations under which children grow up in this world are dire sometimes and require immediate action, but also long term strategic planning. I think it is reason for hope, but also a future challenge to see that governments are in a way beginning to take back responsibility by putting early childhood on to the G20 agenda for instance as has happened last year in Argentina and now Japan taking the leadership to actually connect the question of education and the question of early childhood development, the importance of education for economic development in a country with the fundamental question of sustainability on this planet and to see governments taking leadership in all this is extremely important.

I suppose we should all take and we push it all, sort of embrace that invitation, the leadership that is being shown by Japan right now in this hall, but also over the program for beginning G20 process and contribute to that question about how do we actually see as citizens of this world, the relationship between what we do as professionals, as advocates, as policymakers, as researchers, but the fundamental question of how do we survive on this planet, how do we make things sustainable and this is an opportunity, a challenge and I think I would like to say I am hopeful that we can enter into this conversation and that we are moving from separate discussions of separate interest groups into a more holistic discussion between different stakeholders including governments who play a central role in all this.

Yoko Ishida (MC)

Thank you very much. In addition to the Q&A, I think we were able to have quite a deep discussion and debates on the dialog and also on the summary, the wrap-up session. We were able to hear from you some of the advices and recommendation to the Japanese government. Thank you very much for your opinion.

The time has actually come to close this meeting. Dr. Okengo, Professor Hamano, Mr. Priyono, Ms. Nakamura, Ms. Chen, Ms. Takaoka, and Mr. Urban, please give them a big round of applause. Thank you very much. The panelists and the keynote speakers, would you like to go back to your seat? Thank you very much.

Through the presentations and discussions, we talked about kind of things we have to work on, importance and evidence. We were able to learn a great deal about the roles and the significance of the early childhood education. If it was of some help for all of you, it would be great for all of us as one of the organizing committee members. With this, we would like to close the JEF for SDGs, Japan Education Forum for Sustainable Development Goals. With this, we would like to close this year's forum. On behalf of the forum organizers, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the keynote speakers and panel members. Thank you so very much and at the same time, we would like to express our sincerest gratitude to each and every one of you who has remained until the very end of this forum. I would like to express the gratitude to JICA who has been providing the support and also for the simultaneous translation, the translators for giving us a very good high quality translation service as well as the papers and materials.

This would be put into the report both in English and Japanese and then, you would be able to read it at the site's webpage. We would like you to take a look at it and also at the MEXT. The keynote lectures would be uploaded in YouTube which will be done by the MEXT. We would like you to take a look at it. Well, two last things, before going back, please fill out the

questionnaire sheet and submit it to the person in charge or put that into the box which has been established at the reception. And if you are not able to fill out the forms, then you are able to have an access through the internet. You will see the survey and then, your code is shown on the right hand on the top. We would like you to have an access to the site on the web. One last thing, please make sure you do not take the simultaneous translation receiver back home. Please leave them here in the site. Thank you so very much for the entire day.