

Background and Objectives

Achieving universal quality education is a common goal of paramount importance throughout the world. Japan has been leading the international community through the occasions of G8 Summits and Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) in an attempt to realize the Education for All (EFA) goals by 2015. International cooperation in education is essential for realizing human security. In 2010, Japan launched its new education cooperation policy based on the guiding principles of “supporting self-help efforts and sustainable development,” “answering the needs of the marginalized populations” and “respecting cultural diversity and promoting mutual understanding”. Japan also proposed a basic education assistance model called “School for All,” aiming to provide a quality educational environment for all children and youths by improving the overall learning environment, working together with schools, communities and administrations. In this way, Japan reaffirmed its commitment to continued support of basic education.

As the target year 2015 for achieving EFA goals and MDGs is drawing nearer, the self-help efforts of developing countries and the international community’s support have produced significant results in expanding access to primary education. With the spread of the primary education, lower secondary education has come to play a greater role as it functions as an important bridge connecting education and skills / jobs. The UNESCO’s *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2012* focuses on skills, and the World Bank’s *World Development Report 2013* on jobs. In this context, too, the international community places a high priority on improving the quality of basic education. However, issues still remain: unsatisfactory academic achievement; the need to increase the number of teachers at lower secondary schools and to train them in order to enhance their motivation, knowledge and teaching skills so as to provide better learning opportunities for those who have completed primary education; and the need to improve teaching methods and school facilities. In order to improve the quality of education and to ensure desirable academic achievement, it is vital that we improve the organizational capacity to manage and administer teaching profession in addition to the quality and skills of teachers. We must make comprehensive efforts to improve both the quantity and quality of lower secondary education, which is a part of basic education. In Japan, too, efforts are being made to improve teachers’ quality and capacity at every stage including pre-service, induction and in-service. For bringing about good quality basic education, the issues concerning teachers are universal and of utmost priority, and in order to expand good quality basic education, renewed attention is being paid to the roles and qualifications of teachers and to the issues teachers must overcome.

The 10th JEF will once again focus on basic education, a priority of Japan’s educational cooperation, featuring the theme of “Issues concerning Teachers: Toward Expanding Good Quality Basic Education”. With prominent practitioners in educational development invited from international organizations as well as noted scholars specializing in education, we will discuss teachers’ roles and issues involved in expanding good quality basic education and how international cooperation in education should be pursued in the post-2015 years. How can Japan’s abundant field-based experiences contribute to the development of education in accordance with policy-oriented trends? We warmly welcome all participants to actively join this discussion.

The Japan Education Forum (JEF) is an annual international forum established in March 2004 through governmental and academic collaboration as part of Japan’s educational cooperation. Its purpose is to provide an opportunity for open and frank exchanges of opinions and ideas by officials in the public sector, practitioners of international development and NGOs, and scholars on ways of promoting self-efforts of developing countries toward sustainable educational development and of effective international cooperation in education. The forum also offers an opportunity to present Japan’s own experiences in educational development and its international cooperation in practice.