

Executive Summary of The Japan Education Forum X (JEF-X)

- Collaboration Toward Self-Reliant Educational Development -

Outline of the Forum

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 an open and frank exchange 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 experience in educational development and its international cooperation in practice. This year's topic was "Issues concerning Teachers: Toward Expanding Good Quality Basic Education" and invited discussion on the key component of quality education—a good teacher. The forum is jointly organized by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), Hiroshima University and the University of Tsukuba. The event is also supported by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

This year JEF X was held in the Assembly Hall of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology on February 7, 2013 in Tokyo. In accordance with the theme, the forum focused on issues concerning teachers of compulsory education at the primary and lower secondary levels. In the morning, two featured keynote speakers addressed the assembly. The first keynote speaker, Dzingai Mutumbuka, Chair of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) was followed by a keynote speech from Shinji Kubota, Professor of the Division of Education, Faculty of Human Sciences at the University of Tsukuba. A question and answer session followed in which the audience could discuss the issues freely with the keynote speakers. The afternoon featured a panel session which presented multiple viewpoints on "Issues concerning Teachers, Affecting the Learning Achievement of Students in Primary Education" and "Challenges Faced by Teachers of Lower Secondary Education". The event concluded with an open floor discussion among all of the speakers followed by concluding discussions from the keynote speakers and panelists. In total, more than 150 people participated in the forum including diplomats from many foreign embassies, various ministry officials, development cooperation agency representatives, university faculty members, NGO/NPOs, and the general public.

Keynote Speech by Dr. Dzingai Mutumbuka, Chair of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA)

In his keynote address entitled "Teachers: the Bridge to the Future of African Education", Dr. Mutumbuka stressed that a good system of education is the result of appropriate learning materials, willing students and competent and motivated teachers. As the single-most important input into the education process, teachers and their effectiveness should be at the center of education strategies but this is rarely the case. Moreover, while progress is being made on teacher provision, 1.7 million new teachers will be needed to achieve Universal Primary Education in 2015 with 993,000 of these posts in Africa. Teacher student ratios are still very high and in the case of Malawi the ratio of 1:80 is common. Dr. Mutumbuka then outlined five major challenges centering on teacher issues beginning with the fact that trained teachers are not necessarily knowledgeable or professionally skilled to be considered qualified in Africa. Second, he addressed the issue of high variability in teacher salaries which can range from 1.6 to 9 times per capita GDP across the African continent. The issue of the undersupply of science, mathematics and technology teachers also has serious implications which makes JICA's training of Math and Science teachers through the SMASE program based

in Nairobi, Kenya so very important. Fourth, attention needs to be given to the allocation of teachers and to improve upon inequitable distribution which has a negative impact on education quality. He concluded that the challenge of service conditions, status and motivation have a direct impact on whether the teaching profession can attract the best talent. Teacher issues such as these are a major concern for education policy makers and will only continue to grow in importance in the coming years.

Keynote Speech by Shinji Kubota, Professor of the Division of Education, Faculty of Human Sciences, University of Tsukuba

Dr. Shinji Kubota examined the issues concerning Japanese teachers at compulsory education schools many of which were similar to those found on the African continent. In Japan, according to a 2010 survey on local educational expenditures, 70% of the total educational expenditures go to teachers' salaries and when combined with salaries for other school personnel the figure rises to 85% leaving a very small amount for educational activities, maintenance and auxiliary programs. There has been a significant decline in the number of teachers with insufficient abilities since a peak in 2004 and new jobs have been created in the schools such as Deputy Principals, Chief teachers and Teacher advisors. A growing concern in Japan is the attention teachers must give to issues such as bullying at school, non-attendance of students, special needs education as well as foreign student education resulting in large hours of overtime work. This also results in great variability in the competition rate for teaching positions due to geographical location. Another related issue to the strenuous workload, is the increasing number of public school teachers on sick leave and those experiencing mental stress. In 1998, the figure was 39% but this has risen to 62% in 2007. Dr. Kubota concluded his speech by saying these issues can be addressed through improvement in the quality of pre-service training, employment and in-service training which will restore parents and local people's trust in teachers.

At the conclusion of both keynote speeches, a question and answer session was held. Questions were received from audience participants of Indonesia, Vietnam, and cabinet offices in Japan. Topics included 3rd party evaluation of schools, in-service and student teacher training, education in conflict affected areas and the alignment of parent and school values.

Panel Session

A panel session was held in the afternoon under the themes of "Issues concerning Teachers, Affecting the Learning Achievement of Students in Primary Education" and "Challenges Faced by Teachers of Lower Secondary Education." Ramon Bacani, Director of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Center for Educational Innovation and Technology (SEAMEO INNOTECH) served as a presenter and was also the moderator for this session. Three more panelists provided the audience with first-hand reports of teacher issues from global perspectives to local efforts. Panelists represented UNESCO's International Task Force on Teachers for EFA, the JICA GUATEMATICA Project and a former JOCV participant now serving as an elementary school teacher in Japan.

Edem Adubra, Head of the Secretariat, International Task Force on Teachers for EFA, Division for Teachers and Higher Education, UNESCO, began the session by emphasizing that solutions cannot be found if the issues are unknown. This requires careful monitoring which UNESCO meets through its General Education Quality Analysis/Diagnosis Framework (GEQAF). One of the 15 analytical tools is designed as a guide for teachers and educators reflection. Questions focus on the entire system in which teachers and educators exist from first entering the teaching profession to the training, recruitment, deployment, retention and the management of teachers and educators. Evidence from the research shows that considering the profile of the teacher alone is not sufficient to determine what is really happening in the classroom and thus the system as a whole needs to be examined. Through use of the GEQAF

diagnostics areas of strength and weaknesses can be identified along with specific gaps that need to be addressed leading to the development of action plans which allow for improving the education system to deliver equity and quality.

Ramon Bacani, Center Director for SEAMEO INNOTECH was the second presenter. He addressed the challenges of teachers in promoting quality basic education. He described first the ideal characteristics of a teacher as someone who is technically competent, physically, mentally and emotionally fit, and motivated and committed. To expound on the “technically competent” dimension, Dr. Bacani presented the competency standards for Southeast Asian teachers of the 21st Century which is the result of an action research conducted by SEAMEO INNOTECH in collaboration with the Ministries of Education of SEAMEO member countries. To elaborate on the two other dimensions of the ideal teacher, he presented the profile of a passionate teacher which was generated through a Regional Policy Forum conducted by SEAMEO INNOTECH. After having focused on the ideal, Mr. Bacani went on to illustrate the challenges found in pre-service teacher preparation, the learning environment and actual working conditions. Teaching is not usually a “first-choice” among high school graduates and class sizes tend to be particularly large while salaries remain generally low. Solutions for these issues are a strong system of instructional support, continuing professional development and creating a policy environment that promotes teacher welfare and assures sustained increases in budgetary support for public education in line with UNESCO benchmarks.

Rina Rouanet de Núñez, Education Specialist and the JICA GUATEMATICA Project Local Coordinator continued the discussion by focusing on issues related to the internal efficiency of primary and secondary education in Guatemala as well as the challenges ahead for teacher education. The results from the Second Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study of Educational Quality in Latin America (SERCE) show that to improve the quality of education the training of teachers must be supported. JICA has been addressing this issue through the GUATEMATICA Project with the result that students’ performance in mathematics at the primary level of professionalized teachers was significantly influenced. Moreover, mastery and appropriate methodology can be observed in math classes which reflect the improvement of teachers. As many of the issues found in primary education are similar to those in the state of teaching in secondary education, Ms. Rouanet de Núñez concluded that teacher training and retraining at all levels are imperative and can no longer be delayed for the improvement of education in Guatemala.

The final presentation of the session was made by Tomoko Udagawa, Teacher, Sashiogi Elementary School in Saitama city and a former participant in the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers’ special program for in-service teachers. She compared issues concerning teachers in the field of arithmetic from the Republic of Palau and Japan where she currently teaches at Saitama Municipal Sashiogi Elementary School. She found that both countries share similar problems which constitute a need for veteran teachers. In the absence of veteran teachers in Palau, advice given by JOCVs led to the improvement of teaching skills and confidence in teaching. However, Japan must also confront a lack of human resources as many veteran teachers retire and it will be harder for Japanese teachers to improve their skills by getting advice and exchanging information with experienced teachers.

After the panel session, Dr. Bacani moderated an open floor question and answer session with the panelists. Questions were taken from participants representing various government offices and NGOs in Japan, as well as a student, a former Bangladesh Embassy employee and a Vietnamese scholar. Topics addressed were the means to recognize high achieving teachers and not at the expense of promotion out of the classroom and into administration, JICA’s lesson study as a form of in-service training abroad and how to provide stable investment in education despite natural disasters.

At the end of the afternoon, Prof. Riho Sakurai, Hiroshima University, moderated a concluding discussion with the panelists, panel session moderator, and keynote speakers to briefly summarize the day’s main points and to challenge the audience to reflect upon them sincerely. In conclusion, it was stressed that educational collaboration should continue

to put emphasis on the enhancement of education through efforts to effectively resolve the issues facing teachers. In this way, the 10th Japan Education Forum on collaboration toward self-reliant educational development provided a venue for thought provoking discussion on what should be done in the future to enhance quality education as an international community.