

**REPORT OF A SEMINAR ON HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF JAPANESE
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN EDUCATION - WHY WAS THE AID FOR BASIC
EDUCATION A “TABOO”?-**

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Purpose of the Seminar

The seminar started with professor Yamada stating that the purpose of the seminar is to look into the historical development of Japanese international cooperation in education and why Japanese cooperation for basic education was a “taboo”. She pointed out that Japanese government has been hesitant to supporting basic education in developing countries for a very long time. But at a point in history, Japan changed its policy of aid to education. The result of this change is that, currently, a chunk of Japanese aid to education goes to basic education. What happened in the process of policy change? What motivated this change? These questions will be answered in Prof. Saito’s discourse.

Aid for Basic Education: A Priority

Prof. Saito mentioned that in recent times, most international assistance agencies and most donor countries, including Japan, have shifted their policy priority towards basic education. This shift came to the fore in Japan in 2002 when the then Prime Minister, Koizumi, declared BEGIN (Basic Education for Growth Initiative) as Japanese basic principles and policies in the fields of international cooperation in development. He further reiterated that until about 15 years ago, Japan was very much reluctant to commit to aid in basic education in developing countries. What was prevalent among Japanese assistance community then was a negative or diffident attitude toward basic education assistance. This was seen in most discourse in those times which regarded intervention in basic education in developing countries as a taboo. He quoted a report by Prof. Utsumi to support this claim. The report mentioned that “When the Study Group of JICA made the final report 10 years ago, it was very difficult to assign the highest priority of aid to basic education. In the development assistance circle including JICA, international cooperation for basic education was seen as a taboo. Nowadays, it may be hard to imagine the prevailing atmosphere at that time”. Therefore, the question he sought to answer was “When and what reasons did such a negative or difficult attitude towards aid to basic education come into being and take a root among the Japanese people concerned with foreign assistance?”

Beginning of Aid in Education

Japan started aid to education in 1954 in two different ways. The first was to establish a foreign student scholarship programme targeting students from Asian countries and Middle East to contribute to human resource development in these countries in April. This was done by the Ministries of Education and Foreign Affairs. Then in the month of October of that

same year, Japan joined the Colombo Plan which was initiated by the United Kingdom and the USA to provide development assistance to Asian countries. By becoming a member of the Colombo Plan, Japan was formally recognised as a donor country. Prof Saito also pointed out that in 1962 Japan started its Technical Assistance programme. In this programme too, assistance to basic education was left out.

To show concern for aid in primary education, Japan decided to support the UNESCO initiated Karachi Plan. This Plan aimed to achieve universal compulsory education in Asia by 1980. This move also ignited Japan's interest in assisting Asian countries to develop their education systems. Therefore in 1961, Japan's Ministry of Education sent study teams to Southeast Asia and the Middle East to investigate their educational conditions and the possibility of Japanese cooperation. These study teams proposed four principles for education aid policy, namely:

- ❖ It should be based on highly humanitarian idea.
- ❖ It must comply with developing countries real conditions and their needs.
- ❖ It must touch a chord of the heart of the recipient nations.
- ❖ Education cooperation should be preceded or accompanied by economic cooperation

According to Prof. Saito, their report was the first document that proposed a basic philosophy for international cooperation in education in Japan.

To further show concern for the Karachi Plan, Japan's Ministry of Education decided to host UNESCO'S first regional conference for Ministers of Education to review the progress made on the Plan in Tokyo in April 1962. During this conference, a high ranking official of Japan's Ministry of Education, Mr. Amani, argued that the implementation of the Karachi Plan will not be easy. He pledged that Japan will provide assistance not only in the form of sharing experience, knowledge and technology, but also in both material and financial aspects. He advised that developing countries should not be relegated to the background and that they should be involved in the discourse of development issues hence this calls for cooperation. This is because national education is a country's own domestic matter that has something to do with the foundation of national mentality.

He noted that in the late 1960s and early 1970s, articles on international cooperation in education were often featured in the official journal of the Ministry of Education. According to Prof. Saito, although these articles paid attention to the sovereignty of developing countries, in those discussions published in the journal, one could not identify any particular reluctant attitude toward aid to basic education.

Cooperation Programme undertaken By MOE in the 1960s

To fulfill Japan's promise to cooperate and assist developing countries in Asia, the following cooperation programmes were started in the 1960s.

- ❖ Science education cooperation programme (1966) - Dispatch of science educational experts to five countries together with the supply of educational equipments and materials.

- ❖ Invitation of educational leaders (1966) – High ranking educational leaders were invited from five countries in Southeast Asia for a study tour to Japan
- ❖ Donation of the chair of Japanese Studies to universities in Asia (with MOFA, 1965)
- ❖ UNESCO International Graduate Course in the Field of Chemical engineering in Tokyo Institute of Technology (1965)
- ❖ UNESCO-NIER Regional Programme for Educational Research in Asia (1967)
- ❖ Mobile Training Teams Programme in cooperation with UNESCO (1970)- This was the dispatch of mobile training team of expert to one country for an effective training programme in the field of agricultural education with cooperation with UNESCO.

In the late 1960s, Japan was achieving rapid economic development. This resulted in the accumulation of high trade surpluses. This overwhelmed Asian countries. And it created frustration and resentment among Japan's trade partners in Asia. Hence they began to criticize Japan's foreign aid policy, which gave preference to the tied loan over grants, as mainly a tool for seeking Japan's own commercial interests. Therefore they branded Japan an "economic animal". As a result of these criticisms, Japan began to review its overall assistance policy. This review led to the establishment of the External Economic Cooperation Council (EECC) in 1969 as an advisory body to the Prime Minister (PM). This council was mandated to deliberate on new policy for economic cooperation and technical assistance.

Report of the External Economic Cooperation Council (1971)

In order to change the image of Japan economic Cooperation, a new policy advocating strengthening technical cooperation to developing countries, especially in the fields of health care, culture and education was promulgated. Also the council proposed cooperation in the field of educational cooperation and emphasised that since the cost of education has to do with the sovereignty and nationalism of developing countries, it must be especially sensitive to intervene in general national education or basic education. It is worthy of note that the first reference to assistance to education in developing countries was made in this report.

One month after the publication of the report of the EECC, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) through its Economic Cooperation Bureau released a document entitled "How to progress in International Cooperation in Education" in which they said that "If they (developing countries in Southeast Asia)¹ think that the dominance of commercial concern in our economic cooperation programme has brought about anti-Japanese criticisms in Southeast Asia countries; from that on we must increase aid with non-economic component. From this perspective, and based on our own experience from the Meiji era, we think that it should be given the top priority to educational cooperation for developing countries to support that they get firm for footing their nation building".

¹ Parenthesis added.

Reluctant Attitude to Aid in basic Education

While promoting educational cooperation, the report of the MOFA warned that because education is a delicate matter that involved the matter of sovereignty and nationalism of the recipient countries, it must be treated prudently so as not to be intrusive. In the report, the definition of educational cooperation was so wide that it covered the area of primary and secondary education, technical and adult education and vocational training.

In the area of primary and secondary education, Japan became afraid that she will be met with strong opposition against promoting their nationalistic sentiments. Therefore, the MOFA report also recommended that aid activity should be confined to support for infrastructure (so called indirect cooperation) such as construction of school buildings, education facilities, text books, teaching materials and audio-visual equipments. He argued that MOFA took the above course because it was nervous that interfering in Basic Education will provoke nationalistic sentiments in developing countries as a result of the mounting increases in anti-Japanese feelings among some citizens of Southeast Asian countries.

Research Council on Educational Cooperation for Asian Countries

In August 1971, an ad hoc Research Council on Educational Cooperation for Asian countries was established under the Ministry of Education. The council was made up of members who represented various fields and sectors including high ranking officials from MOFA. Those from MOFA were put on the council to see to it that aid to education is not shifted to basic education. In order to fulfill its term of reference, the council dispatched research missions to six countries to investigate their needs for educational cooperation.

In March 1972, the council presented its report which was made up of (1) basic concepts of educational cooperation (2) priority areas of educational cooperation and (3) recognition of strengthening of relevant domestic structures and communication links. It pointed out that international cooperation in education should follow the following basic principles in educational cooperation:

- ❖ In international cooperation, a careful attention should be paid to languages, cultures, history and national values of recipient countries.
- ❖ The most effective policy must be adopted based on the requests of the recipient countries. In Asian countries, aid for the development of primary and secondary education must be given priority.
- ❖ Primary target areas should be Southeast Asian countries.
- ❖ Educational cooperation should be promoted under a mutual understanding based on the intimate human relationship with the counterparts of recipient countries.

The final report also made the following proposal in connection with support for primary and secondary education:

- ❖ Such matters as educational administration and improvement of contents of education basically belong to their (developing countries)² jurisdiction
- ❖ We should put emphasis on the indirect cooperation such as improvement of quality of education through the support for teacher education, in-service training and supply of educational equipments.
- ❖ Construction and supply of Teaching Training Centre as an institutional base for integrated and continuous cooperation for in-service training of teachers will be one of the effective and most appropriate ways of support.
- ❖ In some Asian countries, experimental Model Schools should be established for innovation in primary and secondary education. It seems to be an effective way to support such schools.

Furthermore, in the final report of this council, the general orientation for educational cooperation seemed to have aligned with the original idea of MOE. This is because the report confirmed that primary and secondary educational field is the main focus of international cooperation in education. This meant that the negative attitude of officials of MOFA toward aid to basic education seemed to have relaxed.

Central Council of Education (1972-74)

Soon after the publication of the report of the Research Council on Educational Cooperation for Asian countries, the MOE commissioned the Central Council of Education (CCE) to deliberate on a wide range of policies and activities relevant to international exchange in education, research and culture. Among the issues discussed was international cooperation for developing countries.

In 1974, the CCE submitted a report on International Exchange, Research and Culture to the Minister of Education. The report recommended that the policies and activities that consisted of 12 items covering almost all forms of the proposed bilateral and multilateral cooperation that have discussed during those days. In this report, there was no particular reference made to the nationalism and sovereignty of recipient countries. However, in this report, the main point that was advocated was the cultivation of Japanese people who would live in international society and would be worthy of reverence and respect. In the order of priority, the report gave less attention to international cooperation with developing countries compared to domestic-orientation (inward-looking international) international educational policies such as education for Japanese children living overseas and returning students and education for international understanding.

Difficulty in putting Policies to Action

² Parenthesis added

At the stage of implementing the proposed activities by CCE, MOE encountered many impenetrable difficulties. Reference from multilateral cooperation through UNESCO, MOE officials virtually lacked experiences and technical know-how for the bilateral cooperation and qualified personnel to engage in cooperation activities. An official of the international section of MOE expressed their anxiety for international cooperation for Asian countries as follows “Generally speaking, we do not have enough knowledge and understanding of the conditions in Asian countries. With reference to language as means of communication, we are not good at even speaking English and have very poor opportunity in Asian language. More basically, compared to UK and France, we have too little experience in external aid. We are not ready not only mentally, but also in terms of accumulating knowledge and skills for aid. In fact, we feel anxiety that how many people that have necessary qualification and capacity for education aid for Asian countries could be mobilized”.

Establishment of JICA

At the end of 1973, there occurred intense bureaucratic struggle in the government for the establishment of new agencies for international cooperation. Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) and Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) made a budget request to Ministry of Finance (MOFA) to establish their own agencies to facilitate the development and import of natural resources and to boost agricultural aid for stable food import. Ministry of Finance and MOFA opposed the idea of creating such sector- based aid agency. There occurred an intense controversy and negotiation among ministries and intervention from politicians of the ruling party. Finally, they agreed to create a new technical cooperation agency, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), integrating two agencies under MOFA (OTCA and Overseas Emigration Service) and absorbing the functions of two agencies proposed by MITI and MAF. Hence in May 1974, the law to create JICA was enacted and in August, JICA was formally established as an international aid agency which administrates almost all bilateral cooperation programme in Japan.

In the hasty and intricate establishment of JICA, the MOE was almost totally excluded. MOFA, MOF, and MITI gained and shared high ranking position in JICA. Although MOE had some stake in JICA through education cooperation, even a middle class position was not allotted to it. Consequently, from the onset of JICA, MOE of education failed to establish good relationship and exchange technical know-how with it. As a result, it became difficult for MOE to conduct bilateral cooperation. For that reason, MOE totally withdrew from a small number of bilateral cooperation programmes that they had administered. For example, the Science Education Cooperation programme that the MOE originated in 1966 and entrusted its logistic task to OTCA was totally transferred to JICA in 1976. Furthermore, the programme that invites educational leaders from developing countries was discontinued. And also the teacher training center project promoted in both the reports of CCE and EECC ended up being an unprofitable project. Accordingly, the moral of MOE officials toward international cooperation met a setback.. They became frustrated. To withdraw from such programmes, probably, they needed some justification. There occurred among them a psychological conversion to justify their unachieved wish. The officials of MOE thought that JICA could not manage cooperation programmes in basic education without their support and expertise. Base on that conviction, they argued that JICA should not touch basic education. They further

convinced themselves that basic education was originally an untouchable sanctuary that did not permit external intervention. They then began to take sides with MOFA's reluctant attitude towards basic education. From then on, the public discourse on basic education became prevalence among Japanese assistance community as if it was a national consensus.

On the other hand, in the aid community in JICA, project in basic education has been kept away for other reasons. According to Prof. Oshinomi,³ these were:

- ❖ Aid for a vast basic education system is a task like working in a bottomless pit which makes it difficult to achieve certain results.
- ❖ Less dependent on foreign currency, less commercial return to the donor country.
- ❖ Compared with big infrastructural projects, basic education projects lack visibility or demonstrative effects.
- ❖ Project such as building large number of primary schools in a wide area takes more construction cost than building a single university.

Long Missing Link in the International Cooperation for Education in MOE

It was after the World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA) held in Jomtien in 1990 that the officials of MOE again become interested in and felt a mission for assisting developing countries to develop their basic education. At least on the side of MOE, there was a long missing link, a span of 20 years in the international cooperation for basic education.

Ministry of Education also recognised that it was vital to repair the strain relationship between it and JICA. In this context, from the late 1990s, we can see a series of cooperation activities between these two organizations to promote international cooperation in basic education in developing countries.

Discussions after the Presentation

Q.1 Why was the MOE left out in the establishment of JICA?

Prof. Saito answered this question by saying that the basic reason is the strain relationship that existed between MOFA and MOE. He further said that MOFA had in its premises a section which was duplicating the functions of MOFA with reference to cultural education. This resulted into a power struggle between MOFA and MOE. As a result MOFA prevented MOE to post cultural attaché to the various Japanese embassies overseas.

Furthermore, there existed differences of ideologies of how international aid should proceed between MOFA and MOE. MOE was purely interested in educational development aid because of the Karachi Plan while MOFA interest was geared

³ Prof. Oshinomi, an educationist, was a founding professor and former dean of Graduate School for International Development, Nagoya University. He is also a kingpin in educational issues in Japan.

toward satisfying diplomatic needs. MOFA was reluctant to basic education aid because they feared that interfering in the basic education in developing countries could irritate nationalistic sentiments.

Q.2 Are MOFA and MOE still struggling?

Prof. Saito: Now the environment has changed. Their relations got better after Jomtien. Both ministries were well presented on the delegation to Jomtien. Even before Jomtien, some officials of both ministries had begun informal discussions on how educational aid should be conducted has started. The hesitation of Japan to foster nationalistic sentiments in developing countries was reduced in the 1990s. Also because of the 20 years of missing link and its consequences, the personnel of MOFA and MOE have changed so the negative perceptions they had for each other have eroded. Evidence of this change of attitude can be seen in the collaboration between these two ministries in the organisation of the Japan Educational Forum. They even jointly publish a journal.

Q.3 (I) What was the component of Japanese aid model?

(II) What factor(s) motivated the change in Japanese educational aid?

Prof.Saito: (I) There is no concrete Japanese model. However, during the centenary celebrations (1970) of Japan's education, Japan realised that it has something to share with developing countries after reflecting on what it has been able to achieve over the years. Also because of the Karachi Plan, Japan's attention which was originally always focused on education in developed countries, shifted to education in developing countries.

(II) The motivating factor for MOFA was for diplomatic reasons. This left Japan to shift its assistance from hardware to software while the motivating factor for MOE was the conviction that education is very important; it borders on the issue of human rights. Prof. Saito also said that the under current of Japanese educational aid is still based on the belief that education can provoke nationalistic sentiments so care should be taken when providing education assistance.

Q.4 What is unique about Japanese aid?

Prof. Saito: Japan always takes into consideration the cultural interest of the recipient countries. Japan thinks that aid success will not be achieved if donor countries command the recipient countries to tow their whims. Japan still thinks that it should continue to be sensitive to the cultural and other interest of recipient countries. This informed Japan in formulating its principles of educational cooperation enumerated in the discourse.