

# *Kurashiki Declaration*



**KURASHIKI**

Education Ministers' Meeting in Okayama

***G7 Kurashiki Education Ministers' Meeting in Okayama  
14-15 May 2016***

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# ***Kurashiki Declaration***

## ***Introduction***

1. We, the G7 Ministers responsible for education, met for our G7 Education Ministers' Meeting on 14 and 15 May 2016 in Kurashiki, Okayama, a city with a rich history, tradition, and a community that supports education in a unified manner. We appreciate that, through dialogue, we reached consensus on many aspects of the education paradigm for the future.
2. Today's rapidly evolving social and economic development has brought about significant changes. Globalization and technological innovation have opened doors for more diverse societies and new opportunities for wider access to knowledge, for more exchange between people and for a better quality of life. Research findings suggest technological advances, including AI (artificial intelligence) and the Internet of Everything (IoE), have the potential to increase productivity, automate some jobs and create new ones. We face challenges from global issues such as poverty and the widening of income disparity, conflicts, terrorism, massive flows of refugees and migrants, environmental degradation, and climate change.
3. In light of these developments and issues, we acknowledge the importance of discussion on the direction of education policy from global perspectives. We must not ignore income disparities and severity of various confrontations. It is self-evident that education should help people follow ethical principles, understand others, be considerate of human rights (in particular in the case of social minorities), and act voluntarily in order to keep the international society peaceful and to promote its sustainable development. Education has an essential role in helping people fulfil their potential and dreams and in advancing society.
4. In particular, in our coordinated efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism, radicalisation, and terrorism, it is crucial that education promote the fundamental values of respect for one's own and others' lives, freedom, democracy, pluralism, tolerance, the rule of law, respect for human rights, social inclusion, non-discrimination, and gender equality as well as active citizenship education.
5. Based on the importance of education, we declare the following and establish the Guiding Principle of G7 Education Ministers, which outlines how to put the following into practice on a global scale.

## ***I: The New Role of Education***

### **Social Inclusion and Harmonious Coexistence through Education**

6. Facing the persistent and emerging issues such as poverty, youth unemployment, social and economic inequalities, and more recently, the historic cross-border flows of migrants and refugees and the manifestation of violent extremism and radicalisation among some segments of young population, we believe that education can play an important role in realizing *social inclusion and respect for common values*. We recognize that education helps transform societies so that no one is excluded and all people develop social and life competencies to meet their full potential, and dynamically engage in and contribute to the development of societies and local communities with a sense of well-being. We commit to devote every effort to achieve equitable and quality education for all people, within a

lifelong learning approach. We note that the recognition and commitment stated here is in line with the 2015 Incheon Declaration and the new Sustainable Development Goals.

7. Acknowledging the critical role of education in promoting values and behaviour that counter all forms of violence against human dignity, including violent extremism and radicalisation, any form of discrimination and racism and in realizing an inclusive society of harmonious coexistence, we reaffirm the importance of ensuring that future generations learn and comprehend our commonly shared values of respect for one's own and others' lives, freedom, tolerance, democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights. We express our firm commitment to promoting educational practices to foster good "citizenship" on the basis of these common values.
8. Considering the importance of values as drivers of behaviour, we affirm that education should promote cross-cultural dialogue, mutual understanding and nurture moral goods such as empathy towards others and a spirit of hospitality that values the feelings of others. We, in unity as G7 members, therefore will take collaborative action to promote such education by sharing good practices and further advancing international exchange.

### **Competencies Required in the New Era**

9. Those in the next generation, living in this rapidly-changing unpredictable world, must be able to take responsibility to create a positive future. We therefore recognize the need to build up their competencies not only as an effective means to solve given problems but also as a way to ascertain newly arising challenges, to solve them, and to create new values in collaboration with others.
10. To develop students' essential competencies for the coming era, based on educational practice and objective evidence from around the world and taking into account various cultural, social and philosophical backgrounds of our different countries, we consider a fundamental aim to be for all educators to share perspectives such as followings as the foundation for their education practices:
  - What to know (acquiring knowledge)
  - How to use knowledge (acquiring competencies )
  - How to engage in society and live a better life

We believe that education practices based on these perspectives may better equip children with a full range of the transferable skills (including skills/abilities for collaboration and communication, creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, and resilience) that are necessary for our rapid-changing society. We also believe that these practices encourage them to become involved in civic and global engagement. These competencies should be developed on the basis of a solid core of academic knowledge and deep understanding of the concepts underlying that knowledge.

We also expect that various international discussions and work may offer ideas for new education development that responds to changing social needs.

### **International Collaboration for the New Role of Education**

11. In light of the new roles of education discussed above, we underline that promoting international collaboration in education on multiple levels, such as individuals, schools, local communities and countries, helps develop critical and broad competencies, including not only language skills but also a spirit of tolerance towards different views and values, which contribute to developing an inclusive, multicultural society.
12. Japan embraces a holistic approach to learning, for which teachers encourage students not only to

acquire academic knowledge but also to take active roles in school events and extra-curricular activities through extracurricular personalized care and counselling. Japan, as a country being prone to natural disaster, also promotes education that helps children to predict dangers for themselves in the event of a disaster and correctly determine the safest course of action. Acknowledging that each country has rich experience in various fields, we further promote peer-learning among G7 members to improve educational practices in each countries.

### **Education as a Priority Policy Agenda**

13. With a deep recognition that education is a basic human right and is essential for the development of peaceful, prosperous and sustainable societies, we underline the need for further international collaboration and to raise the attention of G7 leaders towards education as a priority policy agenda. We also recognize the importance of public expenditure on education in line with the 2015 Incheon Declaration as well as using those resources effectively in order to achieve quality education for all.

## ***II: How to Improve and Enhance Teaching and Learning***

### **Diversity Education**

14. We affirm that diversity, which helps everyone achieve their potential and be innovative and creative, is a vital dynamic of further development of today's society. Under the recognition that our societies are stronger when diverse populations are inclusive and work together in harmony, we affirm that it is critical to develop people's cultural and global competencies. We note that future international assessments, such as PISA, may well provide a metric to measure progress in this area.
15. We recognize the critical need to address exclusion and/or marginalization, disparities and inequalities, to which children and young people in difficult situations (e.g., migrants and refugees, socially and economically disadvantaged children, students with special needs, abused and bullied children, students who tend to be absent from school, youths who are not in education, employment and training, and children who are suffering discrimination because of their sexual orientation and gender identity) are more likely to be exposed. We, thus, will do our utmost to ensure inclusive and equitable learning opportunities and outcomes to all young people, regardless of their background or circumstance, so that they develop a sense of well-being and acquire the knowledge and skills needed for life and work. In this context, we commit to realizing educational environments in which individuality and diversity are valued and every child and youth can make the most of their potential and strengths.

### **Promoting Girls' and Women's Empowerment for Sustainable, Inclusive and Equitable Growth**

16. We recognize that it is essential to ensure girls' and women's equal rights, access and opportunities for participation and leadership in society in order to achieve sustainable, inclusive and equitable growth. We reaffirm the importance of breaking down gender stereotyping and of promoting the empowerment of girls and women through education.
17. With regard to girls' and women's education, we welcome the increasing academic success of girls at school, but note the continuing underrepresentation of girls and women in certain fields. We advocate and support equal opportunities that enrich life-long learning and capacity development, including through vocational training, to meet the demands of each life-stage, highly developed and diversified social and economic needs, and to advance a diverse range of lifestyles and careers for all girls and women. We recognize that education should foster gender equality by offering the same opportunities for both girls and boys. We commit to support building the capacity of education administrators and teachers to deepen their understanding on gender equality, and acquire gender-sensitive instructional

techniques

18. We recognize the importance of ensuring equal opportunity for women's full and effective engagement in all fields, including STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) fields by changing stereotypical perception of them. We continue to foster further education for girls and women, who take leadership and other various important roles in industrial and technological innovation by raising awareness of potential careers in the field of STEM and by supporting those girls and women who aspire to such careers. We should also encourage, support and raise awareness of the important role of girls and women in entrepreneurship.

#### **Links between Education, Employment and Society**

19. We recognize that in light of borderless labour markets brought about by globalization and technological innovation, there is a need not only to ensure that all individuals can access the training and skills necessary to secure jobs but also to reduce any mismatches that may exist between qualifications and credentials supplied by education/training systems and the required skills and competencies in the current labour market.
20. In order to improve the links between education/training and employment in a technology-intensive world, we promote appropriate updates of education and training especially in information and communication technology (ICT) and STEM fields in order to equip people from all backgrounds with work-related and transferable skills and competencies to initiate, adapt to and assimilate social and economic change, while contributing to social inclusion. We also recognize the potential of a more holistic approach, appreciating other fields including art and design besides STEM, to encourage flexible thinking, risk-taking, and creative problem solving, which can lead to global innovation.
21. We also acknowledge that beyond mastering work-specific skills, there is a need to help children and young people develop work ethics according to which individuals as members of society contribute to social and economic development, should receive a proper reward, and find professional fulfilment. We encourage close cooperation and dialogue among schools, families, and all relevant stakeholders such as employers, unions, local communities, economic associations, and non-profit organizations to promote career and vocational education.
22. We, furthermore, underline the need for shared understanding that education should be delivered in the framework of societies and should be open to, instead of being isolated from, societies and that societies themselves should be open and diverse, respecting all traditions and cultural values. We also acknowledge that education should help children and youth experience the effect of influencing and learning from society and recognize their individual roles and responsibilities within the society. We highlight the importance of sharing the view that the entire society fosters the next generation through education in close cooperation among education institutions, families, local communities and all relevant stakeholders.

#### **Education that Accommodates Technological Advance**

23. Responding to rapid technological advances accompanying the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the Internet of Everything, we reaffirm that ICT literacy is an indispensable skill for children and any learner and that ICT is an effective tool for promoting independent as well as collaborative, interactive and diverse learning, which helps students identify and solve problems. While recognizing the importance of face-to-face interaction between teachers and students, we need to foster quality education using ICT. We affirm that all learners deserve equality of connectivity, access and learning experiences provided by technology to support learning. Recognizing that teachers play a crucial role

in helping students learn and benefit from ICT, we believe it is important to develop teachers' skills to use ICT in the classroom.

24. We strongly encourage the use of ICT to reach out to learners, who are socially and economically disadvantaged or out of school due to physical and/or mental health issues or other reasons, and to meet their diverse learning needs. We appreciate the great potential of ICT in the context of distance education which could also contribute to increasing interactive learning opportunities among students around the world while informing teachers of good educational practices in other countries through computer networks.
25. At the same time, as a response to the potential misuse of technological advance and increased exposure to online information of various natures, we emphasize the necessity of promoting education to equip children and youth with the necessary media and information literacies, skills and competencies to discern quality and source of information. In the context of social media with its large impact on young people, we recognize the need for education and guidance to conduct sound online social interaction, distinguish factual from fake information as well as facts from opinion.

#### **Enhancing and Supporting Teaching Profession**

26. Based on our common recognition that expectations for the teaching profession have broadened significantly and that demands on teachers have grown in response to increasing social diversity and complexity, we express our commitment to collaborative support for professional development of teachers in G7 members to improve their quality and effectiveness. We also promote measures to increase respect for the teaching profession, to improve its' social status and treatment.
27. Given the increased migration of people, we stress that it is indispensable for teachers to acquire cultural and global competencies. In order to cope with this urgent priority for the international community, we work in collaboration and concentrate on the wisdom of each country to train teachers, who will be able to educate students from various cultural, religious, and linguistic backgrounds in an effective manner and from a global perspective.
28. In order to develop essential competencies and enhance a holistic approach to learning, we affirm the importance of empowering and supporting teachers and other school staff through professional development as well as effective and sufficient teacher allocation so that their instructions, in a fruitful collaboration with other professionals and communities, meet the diverse needs of individual learners from various backgrounds according to their abilities, understanding and interests, emphasizing the need for the governments' active investment required to implement the above policies.

#### **Evidence-Based Education Policy**

29. We recognize that education is an essential asset for self-realization, social inclusion and socio-economic development, and that it is important to make the public aware of the effect and necessity of adequate spending on education as well as to foster the understanding that education is a vital investment in our future.
30. We recognize that evidence-based education policy based on qualitative and quantitative studies is important for gaining social support and understanding as well as for maximizing the impact of education policy. We also acknowledge the importance of ascertaining the overall situation of education by advancing research from the perspective of various disciplines and scientific methods.
31. We affirm that, in order to further evidence-based policy, it is important to share good practices and

challenges on education policy research, to promote interactions with government officials and researchers from different countries, and to increase public awareness of their achievements. We emphasize that when collecting, verifying and applying evidence, it is also crucial to take into account the different contexts, social and cultural backgrounds of different countries.

32. Based on this basic recognition, we commit to advancing measures, such as sharing of information among G7 members, to promote research, studies, and analysis of educational results and to facilitate evaluation of educational policies.

### **III: *New Paradigm for International Cooperation***

#### **Internationalization of Education**

33. Having attracted a significant portion of the growing number of international students, researchers and education staff, we recognize that G7 members should continuously create good opportunities to allow young people from around the world to experience other educational systems, cultures and traditions and to share their values.
34. Through international collaboration and learning from each other's best practice, we commit to further working together for more open interaction among institutions, students, teachers, and researchers belonging to different regional higher education networks. We further encourage more universities, students, researchers and staff to participate in international education programs in order to promote learning of young people from one another.
35. We express our commitment not only to promoting studying abroad in higher education but also to enhancing cross-border interactions starting from primary and lower secondary education, encouraging an awareness of the benefits of studying abroad, and strengthening student exchange programs in upper secondary education. To that end, we strongly encourage teachers and principals to experience, work, and learn abroad. When in-person experiences are limited or challenging, we recognize virtual experiences can provide meaningful connections between and among schools and classrooms.

#### **Sustainable Development Goals**

36. We reiterate that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets are universal, indivisible, and interlinked. We recognize that Goal 4 on education of the SDGs plays an important role in enabling attainment of other SDGs. We encourage the further promotion of policies and actions, both nationally and internationally, to accelerate progress towards the achievement of the SDGs including Goal 4. We, as G7 education leaders, welcome the Education 2030 Framework for Action adopted by the global education community in a high level meeting alongside with the 38<sup>th</sup> UNESCO General Conference and express our commitment to its implementation.
37. In light of globalization, where national and regional disruptions and disorder can have a broad impact on global peace and prosperity, we reaffirm the need to further enhance international cooperation and to collectively address common challenges. In particular, we encourage the strengthening of international monitoring and mutual learning to ensure that all people, regardless of their background, achieve the basic level of skills in core learning domains. We recognize the need to strengthen international education cooperation to support capacity-building in developing countries, which is essential to the resilience and sustainability of peaceful and prosperous societies.
38. Acknowledging that our significant achievements in expanding access to education have not



necessarily been accompanied by an improvement of the quality and relevance of education and learning, we express our commitment to focusing on the strengthening of education systems, promoting teacher training, and, as appropriate in country contexts, developing teaching and learning materials. We will also seek to support efforts to link training and skills development with available opportunities for decent work and entrepreneurship.

39. Acknowledging the limited access of vulnerable and disadvantaged populations, especially girls and women, to quality education, we reaffirm the need not only to ensure that all girls and women have access to education but also to deliver education in safe, inclusive and effective learning environments free from gender-based violence and discriminations and to accommodate particular needs of health and well-being including the sanitation and hygiene facilities.
40. In addition, we continue to advance efforts on the commitment, declared in the 2015 G7 Elmau Summit, to “increasing the number of women and girls technically and vocationally educated and trained in developing countries through G7 measures by one third (compared to “business as usual”) by 2030.”
41. We reaffirm our commitment to the SDGs, as G7 members, to build sustainable societies. We further promote Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and strongly support UNESCO in the implementation of the Global Action Programme on ESD, recognizing that multi-stakeholder dialogue and cooperation should be encouraged as much as possible in sharing best practices for further collaboration.
42. In addition, we emphasize that by blending education with relevant areas such as sports, culture, and welfare; we increase the value of education to contribute to the harmonious development and prosperity of humankind, with a view to promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity.

### **Conclusion**

43. We express our sincere appreciation for the participation of representatives from the OECD and UNESCO in these discussions and reaffirm the importance of further building cooperative relations with all relevant organizations in the future.
44. We will fulfil our commitments enshrined in this Declaration and will intend to apply the guiding principles. We welcome the holding of the G7 Education Ministers’ Meeting next year by host country Italy.
45. Finally, we highlight that the Kurashiki declaration, which represents our determination to drive reform of education while looking towards the future, cannot be achieved without daily effort by those on the front line who work with students and engage in educational activities. We continue to work together with all people involved in education in order to help people today build a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable society.

## ***Guiding Principle of G7 Education Ministers***

### **Education for Harmonious Coexistence**

1. Consider such measures as the following to promote mutual understanding, cross-cultural dialogue, empathy towards others and a spirit of hospitality.
  - i. Share and disseminate good practices of teaching children and youth common value
  - ii. Promote international collaborative activities, including through online platforms.

### **Promoting Girls' and Women's Empowerment for Sustainable, Inclusive and Equitable Growth**

2. Prioritize efforts to increase the number of educated and trained girls and women in all fields, including STEM, encourage those girls and women, who assume leadership and other various important roles in industrial and technological innovation, and encourage women's entrepreneurship through the following measures:
  - i. Providing opportunities for and enrich life-long learning and capacity development, including vocational training.
  - ii. Promoting awareness of potential careers in STEM starting at early stages including primary and secondary education
  - iii. Supporting women who aspire to these careers through higher education

### **Links between Education, Employment and Society**

3. Encourage close cooperation and dialogue with schools, families, and all relevant stakeholders such as employees, unions, local communities, economic associations, and non-profit organizations to effectively promote career and vocational education.

### **Education that Accommodates Technological Advance**

4. Promote empirical research on the effects of learning using ICT in order to promote more effective use of this technology.

### **Enhancing and Supporting Teaching Profession**

5. Consider concrete measures to enhance collaboration among G7 members in fostering teachers' global awareness and competencies to educate students from various cultural, religious, and linguistic backgrounds in an effective manner and to help students develop cultural and global competencies.
6. Consider concrete initiatives and international events such as summits, fora, and prize award ceremonies to show respect for the teaching profession and to improve its status and treatment.

### **Evidence-Based Education Policy**

7. Continue efforts to collect international data and share information about each country's practices and challenges regarding evidence-based education policy.
  - i. Build a network of government, research institutions, and universities that work on educational policy research
  - ii. Arrange opportunities for mutual exchange and interaction such as seminars and symposiums so that countries can improve their research level, promote understanding among interested parties, and raise public awareness
8. In the future, promote collaborative empirical research on common issues with an appropriate allocation of roles.

### **Internationalization of Education**

9. Encourage young people in G7 countries to learn from one another.
  - i. Work together for more open interaction among institutions, students, teachers, and researchers and promote continual exchange and cooperation among the different higher education networks (including the European Higher Education Area, the Asian Higher Education Community, etc.)
  - ii. Encourage more universities and students to participate in international education programs.
10. Promote cross-border interaction and enhance awareness of the benefits of studying abroad, starting from primary and secondary education. Implement measures to strengthen student exchange programs in high school

**Sustainable Development Goals**

11. Support comprehensive efforts to improve the learning of children and young people, especially those in vulnerable situations, through teacher training, curriculum development, teaching and learning materials, community participation and ICT use
12. Help develop the skills necessary for decent work through capacity building in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions, the acquisition of transferable skills such as work ethics and teamwork, and enhanced collaboration with the private sector
13. Support education for vulnerable and disadvantaged populations and address the limited access of girls and women in some areas to quality education by promoting a quality learning environment, sending strong messages to eliminate gender-based violence and discrimination in education institutions and encouraging gender-sensitive education facilities with adequate sanitation and hygiene facilities.

We intend to apply the above principles in close cooperation with the OECD, UNESCO and other relevant organizations and stakeholders.