

Statement of Japan on transforming education

1. Basic Concept – a “New Form of Capitalism” and “Investment in Human Resources”

(1) Realization of a “New Form of Capitalism” and SDGs

Today, the threat posed by global issues such as pandemics, climate change, and economic disparities is becoming increasingly severe. Against the backdrop of rising authoritarianism, it is imperative that states which subscribe to universal values such as freedom, democracy, basic human rights and the rule of law work in concert. These states need to promote free trade and strengthen countermeasures against unfair economic activities by maintaining and strengthening a free and open economic order. It is also important for each one of us and for all countries to take various issues such as respect for diversity and preservation of the environment seriously as they are our own concern, and change our behaviors as necessary.

In order to face today’s challenges head-on and build a more prosperous society, the Kishida administration aims to realize a "New Form of Capitalism" that will transform our society into a more resilient and sustainable one in which we can address various social issues while maintaining economic growth. This “New Form of Capitalism” is an upgrade from conventional capitalism, and its purpose is to address (1) the fact that problems such as the expansion of economic disparity and global warming are emerging as negative aspects of capitalism, and (2) challenges posed by authoritarian states such as unfair economic activities that ignore the rules.

Through this “New Form of Capitalism” the Government of Japan aims to create a sustainable society that can resolve social issues. This goal is compatible with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By strongly promoting this “New Form of Capitalism,” we will make a significant contribution to the achievement of the SDGs.

(2) “Investment in Human Resources” at the core of “New Form of Capitalism”

In the “New Form of Capitalism,” we will place investment in human resources at its core with an aim to bring about the full potential of each individual and respond flexibly to changes in the work environment. In particular, we will develop human resources so as to demonstrate creativity and generate added value during major changes such as the Digital and Green Transformation.

Japan is the country which first proposed the idea of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). ESD encourages each individual to proactively grasp the challenges of modern society as their own and bring about new values and behavioral changes that lead to solutions. Nurturing the creators of a sustainable society through ESD is also extremely important for the realization of a “New Form of Capitalism.” In Japan, ESD has been embedded in the National Curriculum Standards, at all schools levels. Japan has also promoted ESD across all sectors of society

including schools, companies, Nonprofit Organizations (NPOs), local governments and other organizations. We will continue to promote ESD and lead the world in this area.

2. Transformation of education in Japan based on "New Form of Capitalism"

(1) Realization of education that leaves no one behind (realization of education that supports socio-economic vitality)

Children are in a vulnerable position, easily impacted by their family environment and the financial situation of their parents. Maximizing the diverse potential of children in different circumstances, with the aim of leaving no one behind, will lead to improvements in the well-being of individuals and society as a whole, and will also serve as the foundation of human resource development. It is from this conviction that we will work on the following three measures in particular.

(i) Establishment of the "Children and Families Agency"

In order to deal with problems such as the declining birthrate, child abuse, bullying and school refusal, Japan has decided to establish the "Children and Families Agency." The mandate of the Agency will be to respect the opinions of children, prioritize their best interests, provide support for children and child-rearing, and protect the rights and interests of children in order to create a society in which all children are able to grow up healthily.

The Children and Families Agency will be placed directly under the Prime Minister, and will serve as a strong control center that will make recommendations to each Japanese ministry and agency in various fields relating to children such as education, welfare, insurance, medical care, and employment, and will also formulate guidelines to ensure the healthy growth of all children under school age. Furthermore, we will strive to enhance and strongly promote our measures relating to support for children and child-rearing while systematically compiling the necessary policies from the perspective of children and securing stable financial resources.

Through these measures, Japan, for the first time in the world, will realize a "Society where children are at its very heart," in which the best interests of children are always given top priority, and initiatives and policies relating to children are placed at the center of the society.

(ii) Digitalization in education

In this age of digitalization, it is important to realize optimal learning for children with the use of digital technology without being constrained by time or space. In Japan, we have a unique project called the "Global and Innovation Gateway for All (GIGA) School Program." This program aims to distribute one device to each student and it is nearing completion, having reached almost every elementary and junior high school student throughout Japan. The program saw steady progress with devices being used in more than 80% of schools during the temporary closure of schools due to the Covid-19 pandemic in February this year. The use of "one device

for each student” will expand the options of support offered to children with disabilities, children victimized by bullying, and cases of school refusal, and will also lead to reducing the workload of teachers.

We will continue to strongly promote the GIGA School Program, carry on the merits of Japanese education, and present a new education model while trying to achieve the best mix of real and digital education.

(iii) Expansion of the financial aid system

In order for each person to continue learning throughout their entire lifetime, it is necessary to make available a wide range of learning opportunities so that people will be able to receive the education they desire, regardless of their financial circumstances.

In Japan, we have already made early childhood education and upper secondary school virtually free of charge depending on the income of the household, and we have also been providing unsparing support such as making higher education free for households with low incomes. Furthermore, we will be expanding the provision of higher education grants and tuition fee exemptions to cover the middle-income group such as high-need households with multiple children and students in the fields of science, engineering and agriculture, and in terms of student loans, we will be creating a system allowing flexible repayment based on life events. In this way, more people will be guaranteed the opportunity to receive education at higher levels.

(2) Further improvement of the quality of education

The Covid-19 pandemic posed a major challenge for education, but it also served as an opportunity to work on further improving the quality of education. We will focus on the following three points.

(i) The role of the school

It cannot be emphasized enough that schools play an important role in the growth of children. Schools guarantee not only (1) learning opportunities and academic ability, but also (2) the holistic development and growth of the person as a whole and (3) safe and secure connections with others, and mental and physical health as a safety net.

The temporary closure of schools during the Covid-19 pandemic has renewed our recognition of the important roles played by schools. In Japan, the government prepared a hygiene management manual and implemented infection control measures such as wearing masks, washing hands, and thorough disinfecting, and implemented the GIGA School Program ahead of schedule to maintain the role of schools to the maximum. In the future, we will continue to make efforts so that schools will be able to play their role and improve the qualifications and competencies of teachers as professionals.

(ii) Promotion of STEAM education

Many of today's pressing issues are inextricably connected to one another. Under such circumstances, STEAM education, which crosses the boundaries of subjects and helps equip students to utilize learning to identify and solve problems in the real world, will become ever more important. Through utilizing the online environment developed by the GIGA School Program, we will cultivate the ability to find issues on one's own, think deeply, communicate with a variety of people including those in other countries, create new values and visions, and solve various social issues.

(iii) Global human resources and innovative human resources who tap into digitalization

Inter-university exchanges and exchanges between students have been seriously disrupted by the pandemic, but we are now striving to develop global human resources by proactively utilizing advantages offered by distance and online education, and restructuring student exchanges by accepting international students and sending out Japanese students.

In addition, we will realize a "virtuous cycle of growth and distribution" through investment in human resources in education and human resource development, and accelerate the response to social changes such as fostering innovative human resources who tap into digitalization at universities, colleges of technology (KOSEN), specialized training colleges, etc.

3. Contribution to international educational transformation based on a "New Form of Capitalism"

Providing a fulfilling educational environment for all children means creating an environment in which parents can give birth to and raise their children with peace of mind. Japan is facing a rapidly declining birthrate and an aging society, and precisely because of this situation it is necessary to nurture children with care and to maximize the potential of each and every one of them through various measures including those related to updating learning.

At the same time, Japan will make every effort to provide international support for education. In particular, in addition to promoting ESD, Japan will work on educational support so that no one is left behind by providing assistance worth over 1.5 billion U.S. dollars by 2025 to support education in developing countries, as well as providing support for girls' education, support for school meals, and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine and neighboring countries. By implementing the abovementioned international educational cooperation efforts, including investment in human resources, we will also contribute to the achievement of the SDGs.

The future of society and individuals lies in education. We promise to continue to make our utmost efforts to realize the different types of happiness of each individual, including all children around the world, and the well-being of society as a whole.