

Educational development and international cooperation in sub-Saharan Africa: Educational universalization and inequalities in the era of SDGs

Graduate School of Human Sciences
Professor Nobuhide Sawamura



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Abstract

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are goals to be achieved globally by 2030, and with regard to education, the SDGs call for providing inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all. While quantitative expansion of education is progressing in African countries, qualitative disparities are widening within and among countries. The purpose of this study is to explore the issues of education and inequalities under the global movement toward universalization of education in the diverse societies of Africa. While focusing on field research to grasp the reality of individuals in difficult circumstances (Figure 1), we are also attempting to redefine disparities and inequalities from multiple perspectives.

Background & Results

The number of out-of-school children in the world has decreased significantly since 2000, but in recent years the trend has reversed: the number of those children has been increasing substantially. This is particularly relevant in sub-Saharan Africa, where the population growth rate is high. In addition, measures taken by education providers, such as increasing the number of schools, have been initially effective. However, later on, the complicated interplay of factors on the demand side, such as problems within the children's families and society in general, appears to slow down enrollment increase. It is not clear what constitutes "quality education," even if it is one of the SDGs. Particularly in African countries, priority has been placed on quantitative expansion, which is easily visible, and qualitative improvements are unlikely to occur. As universalization progresses, if qualitative aspects are taken into account, the disparity may still widen, while being shrouded.

Case studies of several African countries examined how disparities and inequalities are occurring and what corrective measures are being attempted. Many of the problems of educational disparities and inequalities are largely the result of the colonial period and subsequent international assistance. The colonial influence is significant in terms of official language and language of instruction, but it has also infiltrated the entire educational system. This could be further reinforced by international aid and exchange along with the idea that Western-style or globally standardized education is right and is the correct way to go.

Significance of the research and Future perspective

This study is unique in that it attempts to depict the reality of disparities and inequalities under the universalization of education by sharing people's sense of life (Figure 2). It makes full use of data obtained in the field to understand such realities surrounding education and the efforts made to reduce these disparities and inequalities. Rather than uncritically accepting the SDGs, it attempts to decipher the phenomena occurring in the local context, in each country and region, to help achieve these goals. We would like to

continue our research by including areas with different cultures and continuing long-term exchanges with local people so that we can provide feedback to contribute to Japanese society in the future.



Figure 1: Conducting research in a private school established by residents in a slum area, Kenya



Figure 2: Interviewing parents of primary school children in Cote d'Ivoire

Patent

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Treatise

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Keyword

development assistance, international cooperation, education, developing countries, Africa