

Accepting International Students from African Countries under the African Business Education Initiative for Youth (ABE Initiative Program)

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Ms. Rahab Mureithi, an ABE international student, Graduate School of Law, Kansai University, explaining her country Kenya together with intellectual property officials from seven countries at the intellectual property forum, Up-to-date Information on Intellectual Property in Developing Countries (co-organized by the Research Group on African Economy and Environment, Institute of Economic and Political Studies, Kansai University; the Kansai Center, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA); and the Kyoto Office of Shojihomu Co., Ltd.)

<Activity Summary>

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| Major effort | Accepting international students |
| Partner organization | Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) |
| Period | Began accepting in September 2015 |

<Questions for the Professor>

— Could you tell us about your past research and how the program was introduced to the university?

Prof. Yamana: I've long been engaged in research on India's Patent Law, which was once ridiculed as a model law for developing countries opposite that of advanced countries, to clarify its origin and changes through comparison with the U.K. Patent Law. Accordingly, India and other former British colonies have been my research themes, making me continue exploring the impacts generated by the suzerain state's legal systems on its colonies. With this background, then, I've always been greatly interested in the legal systems of African countries that used to be British colonies. In addition, in India, there are many international students from African countries, leading me to add African legal systems on my list of research themes, raising my interest in what kinds of intellectual property systems will be established in African countries, which are expected to further gain power as emerging countries after China and India; what measures will be implemented to protect and use their excellent technologies; and what systems will be established to add value to their biological resources and agricultural produce in order to enhance their brand power.

Meanwhile, I often heard young researchers I met while conducting research in Africa saying that they wanted to learn about systems that had enabled Japan, a small, poor-resource country in Asia, to develop into a great economic power. This made me

keenly feel that young people in Africa should be provided with opportunities to study in Japan. Moreover, when I was an undergraduate student, I directly observed the professor who served as my academic advisor being committed to an intellectual property rights expert training program (in which intellectual property officials were invited to Japan from various countries so they could learn about the Japanese system and take advantage of what they learned when establishing legal systems in their own countries), implemented by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) for developing countries. In this regard, I was thinking that while using its past experience, Japan should put more focus on contributing to developing human resources from African countries.

It was just around that time when I learned that the Japanese government had embarked on the African Business Education Initiative for Youth (ABE Initiative) as one of JICA's programs, and had launched a system of accepting international students for the purpose of developing human resources who could help Japanese companies extend their business into Africa in the future. As a result of my consultations with faculty members engaged in the administration of the Faculty of Law in those days, it was decided that the Graduate School of Law would submit an application for the ABE Program as a host university, and the school was selected as such. Consequently, the school accepted Mr. David Kabwe Amisi, an official from the Mining Bureau, in the Mining Ministry of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as the first group, followed by a second group (from Egypt and the Democratic Republic of the Congo), and then a third group (from Kenya and South Africa). From this September, the school will accept a fourth group (from Ethiopia).

— Could you tell us more details about the program?

Prof. Yamana: The ABE Initiative Program lasts three years at most, with six months spent as a research student, two years as a master's course student, and six months at most as a participant in an internship program that starts after the master's course. In the case of David, in the first group, he studied as a research student for six months, and then successfully passed the entrance examination for the Graduate School of Law at Kansai University, and then studied at the International Cooperation Course for two years before submitting his master's thesis with the research theme "Reform of the Mining Ministry in Congo." Now after completing his master's course, he's currently participating in a six-month internship program at Nakano Seisakusho Co., Ltd., a metal processing company in Fukushima Prefecture. I hear that it's unusual for international students of the ABE Initiative Program to be able to participate in an internship program for such a long time as six months. I'd like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to Nakano Seisakusho Co., Ltd. for providing such an invaluable opportunity.





Mr. David Amisi (left), in the first group of the ABE Program, and Mr. Akira Nakano, CEO of Nakano Seisakusho Co., Ltd., which accepted David as an intern



Nakano Seisakusho Co., Ltd., located in the Fukushima Industrial Complex in Fukushima Pref.

The key phrase of David's internship program is "adding value to mineral resources." Nakano Seisakusho Co., Ltd. processes mineral resources from Congo (such as cobalt, copper, lead, and titanium), and manufactures components for the communications, medical, automotive, precision, and aerospace fields. Congo is one of the top countries in terms of production of mineral resources, but has few technologies to process such resources, meaning that they cannot add value to them. After mining such resources, they can only export them as merely raw materials. They need to establish an appropriate infrastructure to process mineral resources, including refineries. If they can add value, even slightly, to resources they mine, it will lead to greater stability for their economy. Today, when they can export mineral resources only as raw materials, their national economy is always susceptible to international prices fluctuating wildly, preventing them from achieving economic stability. With their national economy remaining distressed, their political situation remains unstable. Of course, there are also many problems with their national governance and organizational operations, such as prevailing dishonesty and corruption. Despite many challenges to be tackled, it will be valuable for David, whose research theme is the reform of the Mining Ministry, to accumulate various experiences, including his current learning about program production (CAD/CAM) related to processing technology, at Nakano Seisakusho Co., Ltd., which manufactures products while adding value to mineral resources. A series of his experiences are expected to play a major role in enabling Congo, rich in mineral resources, to add value to their products, diversify their economy, and gain economic independence.





Finishing a semiconductor device



Preparing a program while checking the plan (CAD/CAM)



Studying design (understanding a plan's significance)



Playing volleyball with staff members



Together with staff members (at Nakano Seisakusho Co., Ltd.) (Photo: Courtesy of Nakano Seisakusho Co., Ltd.)

— Have you experienced any difficulties?

Prof. Yamana: Although Kansai University has many international students, most of them are from Asian countries and understand Japanese.

Unlike them, international students from African countries don't understand Japanese at all when beginning to study at our university. Since their lifestyles and culture are quite different from those of Japan, we're experiencing culture shock every day as a host university. I've explored various countries in Asia and Africa, but my daily communication with international students from African countries makes me wonder whether what I've understood so far about their countries is really correct. Meanwhile, I guess international students are also experiencing many difficulties, because they need to start a new life in a country with a culture quite different from their own. In addition, I haven't realized that our seemingly internationalized campus still has many barriers to international students without any Japanese proficiency, until we began to accept them. I keenly feel that the environment of, for example, extracurricular activities, such as clubs, is far from being friendly for students who cannot understand Japanese. Moreover, their off-campus living environment also has many problems to be solved before true globalization is achieved. Even though globalization is emphasized in Japan, services in English at city offices, hospitals, etc. are available only in certain time slots, or the number of human resources who can provide such services is limited.

Despite such problems, I hope that international students from Africa will learn as much as possible, placing their base at Kansai University. At the Graduate School of Law, they mainly study Japanese legal systems and politics, but I always hope that they'll not only study about Japan, but also interact with researchers, officials, and business persons gathering at Kansai University from around the world, and learn a lot through such encounters. I also hope that they'll rediscover and newly study what they haven't known about Africa. This is why Kansai University has provided lectures developed from the keyword "Africa" with support from various organizations within the university, such as the Faculty of Law and the Institute of Economic and Political Studies. We've also invited many guest speakers from Africa for many workshops in order to provide opportunities for international students, together with Japanese students, to encourage academic interaction with such speakers. Africa has truly diverse aspects, and we think that if international students from Africa know only about their own countries in the future when trying to consolidate the ties between Japan and Africa, they'll not be able to reinforce the ties in a true sense. We believe that our mission includes serving as a base for international students, enabling them to further expand their global perspectives, helping them form an important human network, and providing opportunities to do all of these.



15-round course "Sub-Saharan Laws and Politics," held at the Faculty of Law, with guest speaker Justice Lombwe Chibesakunda (the first Zambia ambassador to Japan, former chief justice of Zambia, present president of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa [COMESA] Court of Justice). Prof. Yamana served as interpreter and facilitator. This course was attended not only by students of the Faculty of Law and Graduate School of Law, but also by many students of the Faculty of Economics, as well as ABE international students.





Together with guest speakers for the Kansai University Intellectual Property Forum 2017 (co-organized by JICA Kansai), attended by intellectual property officials from 10 countries (At the forum, ABE international students also reported on the current situation and problems with their country's intellectual property system.)

Furthermore, although this perhaps shouldn't be regarded as a difficulty, it's not easy to find companies and other organizations that will accept international students as interns. I heard from JICA that in principle, international students themselves need to find such organizations, even though internship programs are the main feature of the ABE Program. Many companies understand that Africa will become an important market in the future. But when asked whether or not they can immediately accept students without Japanese proficiency for two weeks in summer (all ABE students need to join internship programs when they are in the first year of their master's course), or for a maximum of six months after completion of their master's course, most companies put their decision on hold. In short, it seems that the reality is that few companies can accept such students immediately. Actually, I've managed to ensure that international students could join internship programs by asking for cooperation from companies and other organizations with which I've been on good terms.

Mr. Noha Afifi, the second group of the ABE Program and lawyer from Egypt, has experience working as a technology transfer expert for the technology transfer division of Egypt-Japan University of Science and Technology (E-Just), established jointly by the Japanese and Egyptian governments. In summer 2017, he worked as an intern for two weeks at the Japan Institute for Promoting Invention and Innovation (JIPII). He also joined as a staff person at the International Exhibition for Young Inventors held by the Japan Institute of Invention and Innovation (JIPI), to help young inventors from around the world explain their inventions, and provide support for judges.





[2nd group, Mr. Noha Affi, joining as a staff person at the International Exhibition for Young Inventors 2017]

(Top) Together with children joining the exhibition

(Bottom) Listening to comments from young inventors about invention ideas

(Photos: Courtesy of Japan Institute of Invention and Innovation [JIII])

— Do you mean that international students from Africa are assets for Kansai University?

Prof. Yamana: Yes, that's right. I feel that accepting international students is having an immeasurable impact on other students, who perhaps know only about Japan. Even if there is only one international student in a seminar, it follows that the perspectives of other students in the seminar will be changed considerably. For example, if hearing about countries whose unemployment rate is about 60% or 70%, job-hunting students in Japan will come to understand their own position, feel that Japan is a truly rare country, and consider deeply Japanese companies' international competitiveness, which enables Japan to boast the unique feature, as well as what has underpinned such competitiveness. At the same time, considering that globalization is regarded as an inevitable process for Japanese companies, job-hunting students will also reconsider their own international mindset. They will think seriously about strategies for inroads into the African market and globalization by companies for which they might work in the future, and discover the reality that they've almost never thought about African laws or politics, even though they serve as the premise of such strategies. I feel that through daily direct communication with international students, Japanese students are beginning to see Africa as a future partner with a lot of potential.

Many Japanese students wishing to study abroad have so far selected Western countries as their destination. It has been thought that an international mindset of Japanese students can be developed through experience in Western countries. But many companies, not only in Japan but also in other advanced countries, in the future will do more business with Africa and other developing countries. Africa's present population is 1 billion, and it's said that this figure will exceed 2 billion by 2050, surpassing the populations of China and India. With this background, I hope that Japanese students will listen directly to international students from Africa, and will become able to analyze things from Africa's perspective.

To this end, I'd like them to respect an environment where they can interact with international students actively, and teach and learn from each other. Under the ABE Initiative Program, our university presently has international students from four African countries. I hope that Japanese students realize that they've been given invaluable opportunities to listen and speak directly about the four countries, and take advantage of this environment in order to understand more about Africa and emerging countries. I'd like them to continue their interactions and friendships even after graduation, which I believe will further enhance each student's international mindset.





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The African Business Education Initiative for Youth (ABE Initiative) is a JICA program in which excellent young human resources engaged in industrial development in African countries are accepted as international students, and are provided with opportunities to receive master's course education in English at universities in Japan and to participate in company tours and internship programs. Through the ABE Initiative, Prof. Yamana has ensured that international students from African countries are accepted at Kansai University, thereby contributing to developing human resources from Africa.

