

## Feature Article

Actual enrollment situation in Bay Islands of Honduras:  
Analysis using the data of primary school children in Caribbean resort area

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## Introduction

Have you ever heard of a country named the Republic of Honduras? It is located in Central America, far from Japan geographically, and is one of the poorest countries in the region. Honduras is the second largest country in the region, however the area of the whole country is 112,492 square kilometers and is almost equal to one third of Japan's total land area. It has borders with Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua and faces the Caribbean ocean in the north and the Pacific in the south. This country faces a deterioration of public security due to the highest homicide rate in the world recently. It is not easy to visit Honduras for sightseeing, however the Caribbean coast is a popular resort destination. Especially scuba diving is popular and Honduras has received high attention from foreigner tourists as a resort destination in the recent years.

The author of this article has been working on research about the enrollment<sup>(1)</sup> situation of primary school children in Honduras. We visited public primary schools in a middle city of mountainous and capital area, and collected original data that each school kept which was not available outside of the school. Based on the data, we developed a longitudinal database, and

clarified actual enrollment situations of primary school children from the late 1980s to 2000s by checking a trend of aid assistance surrounding Honduran education. We collected the original data not only in the mountainous and capital area, but also in the Bay Islands of the Caribbean that is one of the tourism spots in Honduras. The data amount is not large, however I would like to show an analysis result of the children's enrollment situation based on unique data in the tourism spot of Honduras.

## General information and an overview of current tourism trends in Honduras

The capital city is Tegucigalpa and the population has reached 8.08 million. 91 % of the population is mestizo, a mixed-blood of European and indigenous people, and the remaining 9 % is composed of indigenous people (6 %), African (2 %), and European (1 %). The official language is Spanish, and the Catholic occupies 97 % traditionally but the government respects religious freedoms constitutionally. Though Honduras separated and became independent from the United States of Central America in 1838, the government transited to civilian



Figure 1: Map of Honduras

Source: <http://www.freeworldmaps.net/centralamerica/honduras/>

rule in 1982. The traditional source of acquiring foreign currency is through the export industries of coffee and bananas. Although Honduras still depends on these traditional industries, the government supports the development of new industry. Manufacturing and tourism industries receive a lot of attention. Especially an increase of the tourism industry in recent years is significant, and the income from the tourism industry exceeded the amount of coffee and banana exportations.

The popular tourism destinations in Honduras are the Copán ruins and the Caribbean resort. There are Bay Islands on the Caribbean ocean that are located far away, 60 km in a northward direction from the mainland. These Bay Islands are a main part of the Caribbean resort and composed of Roatán, Utila, and Guanaja, etc. (Figure 1). Roatán is 64 km lies from east to west and 6 km from south to north, and it is the largest and most developed area in the Bay Islands. The Bay Islands are receiving a lot of visibility, and becoming popular for scuba divers as a spot which is surrounded with coral reefs in the recent years. Therefore, the number of foreigner tourists such as Europeans and North Americans has increased. The number of tourists to Roatán increased rapidly, the income of tourism industry became 16 % of GDP in 2015.

#### **Educational situations and research in Honduras**

The author has been working on research about the enrollment situation of primary school children individually, and analyzed education in Honduras. In the area of educational development, environmental improvements for expanding education have been promoted to achieve Education for All in 1990, which is a global commitment to provide quality basic education for all children, youth and adults worldwide. The movement is focused on basic education based on the idea that education is a human right, and countries and international organizations led by UNESCO cooperated and promoted to improve access to education in the world. Compared to developing countries in the world, the enrollment rate in Central America is favorable including Honduras. In Honduras, the education system has changed and basic education is defined as nine years of schooling. It aimed to increase the access to the lower secondary education level. Looking at an overview of primary education in Honduras, the net enrollment rate in primary education level improved to 96 % in 2010 from 89 % in 1990.

On the other hand, Honduras still has high rates of grade repetition and dropout, and most of the children could not complete primary education. As one of the causes, donors and researchers pointed out the high repetition rates in the lower grade. They reported that even if children can have access to the schools, some children continue to repeat a grade and leave school before graduation.

Most of the reports used cross-sectional data for analysis. Cross-sectional data is useful and effective for easy identification of overall trends, however such cross-sectional data are a mix of differing individual cases and thus only show numeri-

cally average conditions. It is impossible to assess individual cases for understanding the enrollment status of individual children. Therefore, some researchers implement a great variety of research, however research analyzed the process leading to repeating a grade and/or dropping out of school is limited.

Accordingly, the author used longitudinal data that makes it possible to track the same target continuously and see the process, and tried to clarify children's enrollment situations individually. Once they entered the schools, what kind of process did they have until grade repetition, dropout, and/or graduation? Through the database developed by school records, we have observed individual children's enrollment situations by regarding their enrollment as a pattern. The results in the mountainous area in Honduras so far reveal that the most frequent enrollment pattern is graduation without any repetition, followed by dropouts in the first grade. Additionally, repetition is not a frequent enrollment pattern; many children dropped out without repeating grades.<sup>(2)</sup> Further, the author focused on the relationship between repetition and dropouts, analyzing the enrollment patterns that lead to dropouts. Although repeaters are observed in the dropouts, dropouts generally occur immediately and without grade repetitions. In other words, unlike the previous research results that suggest grade repetitions lead to dropout, most of the children dropped out without repeating a grade.<sup>(3)</sup>

This research is not regulated in the mountainous and the capital area of Honduras, the data collection was also done in the Caribbean's small islands area which is becoming popular as a tourism destination. Can the same trends be observed in different geographical areas? If not, what differences can be observed? This article presents the analysis results on actual enrollment and school situations by using the data in a tourism spot, the Bay Islands.

#### **4. Research method**

This study targets one primary school in the Bay Islands in the Caribbean, which is a popular tourism destination in Honduras. The study collected school records from 1987 through 1994, to analyze individual student's situations until they left school as graduates or dropouts. In addition, semi-structured interviews with the teacher and community residents were conducted to acquire information on the school and surrounding area. Only one teacher was working in the school and the teacher was in charge as both classroom teacher and school principal. The teacher did not live on the island where the target school was located, therefore the school opened during his/her stay on the island. The school building is composed of one classroom and one teacher's room, and the school applied a combined class (Figure 2). Reference to statistical information produced by National Statistics Institute shows that the attendance rate to schools in the area at 1988 was 47.0 % (48.0 % for boys and 47.0 % for girls).

Similar to Sekiya (2014),<sup>(4)</sup> the author collected individual data until students left the target schools as a graduate or drop-

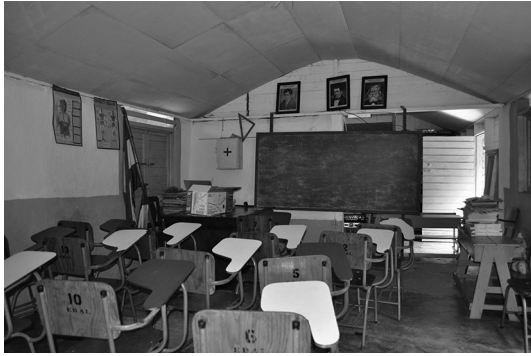


Figure 2: Classroom in the school

out. The observed trends in the true cohort table were analyzed according to patterns ranked by frequency in i) enrollment, ii) graduation, and iii) dropout/repetition. The sample size of data is 40 students and it is not appropriate for statistical analysis and judgment. Therefore, I would like to show the analysis results as one of the cases of children's enrollment in a Caribbean tourist spot in Honduras.

#### Actual enrollment situations in the Bay Islands

##### Enrollment situations and patterns

Table 1 is a true cohort table developed by database. The number of children whose data was targeted for analysis, who entered school between 1987 and 1994, was 40. The number of children at the time of entrance was set at 100 %. The graduates were 19, and the overall percentage of children who graduated was 47.5 %. Three graduates could complete six grades in six years without repeating a grade, and it is only 7 % of the overall students. One graduate completed six grades by taking the maximum ten years to graduate. Furthermore, one graduate registered in grade six in the fifth year and completed grade six. I could not receive clear information on the student who skipped a grade during the field research, however a similar case was observed from interviews with teachers and parents in the mountainous area. Some student's register grade was de-

cided by teachers and parent's demands and decisions.

Table 2 shows the patterns of enrollment, and there were 24 patterns of school attendance, from entrance to graduation or dropout. Of these patterns, there were only 14 patterns to which 3 or more students belonged, while there were 17 pat-

Table 2: Enrollment patterns

Order	Patterns	No. of Students	Years Registered	Approved Grade Level
1	1P	8	1	1
2	1P2P	3	2	2
2	1P2P3P4P5P6P	3	6	6
2	1R1P	3	2	1
5	1P2P2P3P4P5P6P	2	7	6
5	1P2R2P3P4P5P6P	2	7	6
5	1R	2	1	0
8	1P1P1P2P3P4P5P6P	1	8	6
8	1P1P2P3P4P5R5P6P	1	8	6
8	1P1P2R2P3P4P5P6P	1	8	6
8	1P1R	1	2	1
8	1P1R1P2P2P3P4P5P6P	1	9	6
8	1P1R1P2P3P4P5P6P	1	8	6
8	1P1R1R1P2P4P5P6P	1	8	6
8	1P2R	1	2	1
8	1P2R1R1P2R2P3P4P5P6P	1	10	6
8	1P2R3P4P5P6P	1	6	6
8	1P3P4P5P6P	1	5	6
8	1R1P2P3P4P5P6P	1	7	6
8	1R1P2P3P4R	1	5	3
8	1R1R1P	1	3	1
8	1R1R1P2P3P4P5P6P	1	8	6
8	1R1R1P2P3R3P4P5P6P	1	9	6
8	1R1R1R	1	3	0

Note:  $N = 40$  students, 24 patterns, P, pass; R, repeat; D, dropout.  
Source: The author developed based on collected data.

Table 1: True cohort table

	1st Grade	2nd Grade	3rd Grade	4th Grade	5th Grade	6th Grade	Graduation
Year 1	40						
Year 2	13	12					
Year 3	10	6	4				
Year 4	4	6	6	3			
Year 5		6	3	6	3	1	1
Year 6		1	5	3	5	3	3
Year 7			1	6	4	4	4
Year 8				1	6	4	4
Year 9					1	6	6
Year 10						1	1
Total							19

Source: The author developed based on collected data.

terns to which only one student belonged. This means that there is much diversity in school enrollment patterns. The most frequent pattern was that of dropping out after passing grade one (1P). This means that the student registered in the first grade in the first year and passed the teacher's evaluation for promotion, but the student did not come back to the school in the next school year. The second frequent patterns were that of dropping out after passing grade two (1P2P), and advancing directly to graduation without repeating a grade (1P2P3P4P5P6P). In other words, the enrollment patterns can be divided into two groups: students who dropped out in lower grades or students who continued their schooling until grade six. Furthermore, the pattern was divided by gender, however there was no clear difference between boys and girls. In Latin America, there is no gender difference in terms of access to education although it is still a challenge in other developing countries. On the other hand, according to the Regional Overview 2015 of Latin America and the Caribbean Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2015, there is a trend that girls continued their schooling and continued to higher grades once they entered schools. This analysis result is also applied in this trend.

Concerning the graduation pattern, the most frequent pattern was graduation without any grade repetition (1P2P3P4P5P6P) (Table 3). The most frequent dropout pattern was that of dropping out after passing grade one (1P), and this was followed by the second frequent dropout patterns of dropping out after passing grade two (1P2P) and dropping out after repeating and passing grade one (1R1P). Most of the patterns are that of dropping out in the lower grades. Checking the breakdown of dropping out after passing grade one (1P) by gender, six out of eight students were boys. Looking at grade repetitions, ten out of twenty one students dropped out without repeating a grade and

almost half of dropouts did not experience grade repetitions. In other words, although literature suggests that most of dropped out students continued repeating a grade and left school, it does not apply in the analysis results from the school in the small island area. From the interviews with the teacher and community residents, a specific situation on the island is possibly considered as a factor of leading to student's dropout. Most of parents engage in seasonal labor such as fishing and they often change their residence according to a job. Since a movement of people often happens in the islands area, there is a possibility that students moved their residence and transferred to another school. However, that kind of student was not identified from the interviews with the teacher and community residents.

### *Findings from the data in small islands and surrounding situations in the school*

Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2011 mentioned that entrance with being overage has an impact on the student's enrollment for the following years, particular factors in the small islands might have an influence on age at entrance. The official age of entrance in primary education is defined as six years old. Figure 3 shows the breakdown of entrance age, and most of the students entered the school at seven years old (15 students) and this was followed by entrance at six years old (12 students). In other words, many students entered the target school with being overage.

Most of the students lived on the opposite side of the island or on surrounding islands, and they need to use a boat for going to school. It is possible to go to the opposite side of the island by crossing the island on foot. Actually the author visited the school by crossing the island, however the condition of the path is not good and because of long distance, it is not appropriate

Table 3: Graduation patterns and dropout patterns

Order	Graduate Patterns	No. of Students	Years Registered	Order	Dropout Patterns	No. of Students	Years Registered	Approved Grade Level
1	1P2P3P4P5P6P	3	6	1	1P	8	1	1
2	1P2P2P3P4P5P6P	2	7	2	1P2P	3	2	2
2	1P2R2P3P4P5P6P	2	7	2	1R1P	3	2	1
4	1P1P1P2P3P4P5P6P	1	8	4	1R	2	1	0
4	1P1P2P3P4P5R5P6P	1	8	5	1P1R	1	2	1
4	1P1P2R2P3P4P5P6P	1	8	5	1P2R	1	2	1
4	1P1R1P2P2P3P4P5P6P	1	9	5	1R1P2P3P4R	1	5	3
4	1P1R1P2P3P4P5P6P	1	8	5	1R1R1P	1	3	1
4	1P1R1R1P2P4P5P6P	1	8	5	1R1R1R	1	3	0
4	1P2R1R1P2R2P3P4P5P6P	1	10					
4	1P2R3P4P5P6P	1	6					
4	1P3P4P5P6P	1	5					
4	1R1P2P3P4P5P6P	1	7					
4	1R1R1P2P3P4P5P6P	1	8					
4	1R1R1P2P3R3P4P5P6P	1	9					

Note: N = 19 students, 15 patterns, P, pass; R, repeat; D, dropout.  
Source: The author developed based on collected data.

Note: N = 21 students, 9 patterns, P, pass; R, repeat; D, dropout.



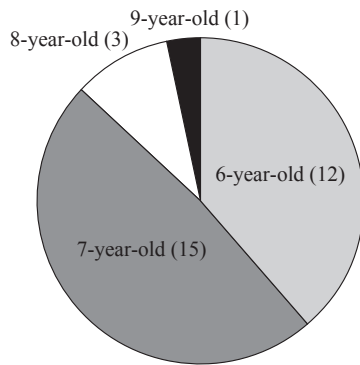


Figure 3: Age at entrance

Note: The author developed based on collected data.

for primary school students to go to school on foot. According to the interview with the teacher, NGO donated a school boat and students used it before. When the author conducted the field research, the boat was not used because of being out of order and lack of repair and maintenance costs. Therefore, students went to the school by parent's fishing boat, however they cannot always use the boat due to the weather. Under this condition, students can only attend the school when it is possible to use the boat. This target school and community people tried to deal with the current challenges from a lack of school management fund. By taking advantage of a resort area, they set up an accommodation facility for tourists on the island with the help of NGO (Figure 4). The accommodation is cleaned well, however it is rare for tourists to use the accommodation. Scuba diving is popular among foreign tourists in the Bay Islands and construction of resort hotels is increasing; however this brings troubles to the community and large capital companies. The idea to offer accommodation by taking advantage of a tourism spot is not bad, however most of the tourists use resort hotels offered by large capital companies. It may be hard to achieve a benefit from school's fund generating activities with a community based.

As mentioned earlier, most of the parents are seasonal workers and some of them did not complete primary education. Once students leave school, most of them start to help their parents. In other words, they can get a job without completing

school education. It is possible to guess that there is less incentive to complete primary education in the target area.

### Conclusion

This study targeted one public primary school which was located in the Bay Islands, one of the tourism destinations in Honduras, and collected school records from 1987 through 1994 and analyzed student's enrollment situations by using a true cohort method.

As for the research results, from analysis of the true cohort table and enrollment patterns, there is much diversity in school enrollment patterns, and the enrollment patterns can be divided into two groups: students who dropped out in lower grades or students who continued their schooling until grade six. Furthermore, almost half of the children dropped out without repeating a grade. There are many students who entered school with being overage; this might be influenced of particular factors in the small islands. Although the education situation has been improved on the national level, there are still challenges remaining in schools of disadvantaged areas, as Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2010 pointed out. For further improvement of basic education, we cannot overlook children in the disadvantaged areas such as in small islands. Especially, we should consider any ideas for students who have a difficulty for going to school and schools which have challenges in school management.

Finally, it is difficult to generalize the conclusion from this analysis due to few number of data and statistical analysis. I would like to note that the analysis result in this article is a case of student's enrollment situation in small islands.

### Acknowledgements

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### Notes

<sup>(1)</sup> In this article, "enrollment" refers to a student's involve-



Figure 4: Accommodation run by school and community

ment with the school system: grade in which the student registered, pass or failure at the end of the school year, repetition of a grade level, dropping out, graduation, transfer to other school, etc. “Entrance” means a student’s first entry into school and “attendance” means the student’s presence in or absence from school on a day-to-day basis.

- <sup>(2)</sup> Ashida, A. and Sekiya, T. (2016). Changes in the repetition and dropout situation in Honduran primary education since the late 1980s. *Education 3-13: International Journal of Primary, Elementary and Early Years Education*, Vol. 44, No. 4, 458-477.
- <sup>(3)</sup> Sekiya, T. and Ashida, A. (2017). An analysis of primary school dropout patterns in Honduras. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 65-73, doi: 10.1080/15348431.2016.1179185.
- <sup>(4)</sup> Sekiya, T. (2014). Individual patterns of enrolment in primary schools in the Republic of Honduras. *Education 3-13: International Journal of Primary, Elementary and Early Years Education*, Vol. 42, No. 5, 460-474.