

Abstract

Foreign aid has initiated and focused on the reconstruction of the war-ravaged economies of Europe and Japan since the Second World War. The focus of development assistance has been on the poverty reduction and economic growth of the developing world. However, by the early 1990s, the critical perspective (pessimistic perspective) appeared regarding the impact of foreign aid for the developing countries. The focus in the development agenda shifted from the amount of aid to aid effectiveness in achieving the development goals. The call for policy coherence for development (PCD) has increased, and the accountability and transparency of aid budget and implementation have been emphasized both inside and outside of the development community. The concerns on the quality of aid have increasingly appeared, and the evidence-based approach was suggested as a way to contribute to it, especially to improve the impact and evaluation of aid.

The study aims to: firstly, identify the definition, major components, and features of evidence-based knowledge (approach) in general, and analyze the meaning of evidence-based approach and its impact on development policymaking, challenges, and necessities to adopt in development cooperation; secondly, identify lessons from the case studies of DFID and USAID among the many developed countries and international organizations in terms of utilizing the evidence-based approach in development cooperation programs, especially in the policymaking, monitoring, and evaluation processes; thirdly, draw the suggestion that KOICA should utilize the evidence-based approach in the policymaking and implementation of development programs in development cooperation.

The origins of evidence lie in experimental medicine, and the term “evidence-based medicine” was developed and spread to the UK and USA as well as to the other academic fields. Evidence-based approach in the field of development cooperation is defined as the approach to perform decision making based on the results from the implementation process and support the programs with the evidence. The approach could be analyzed by both the donors (developed countries) and the recipients (developing countries). In the aspect of the donors, the evidence-based approach can be utilized to show how well the governments make use of the aid funds to the taxpayers (domestic people) and improve the problems of program implementation and the methods of monitoring and evaluations. In the aspect of the recipients, a component of the evidence-based approach is to identify and utilize the best practices and evidence in the implementation of the programs under the circumstances of increased ownership and participation, related to development effectiveness.

In the study, the DFID and USAID have been selected as advanced major organizations which utilize the evidence-based approach in development cooperation. At the DFID, the evidence is critical to its overall policymaking, and the staffs make the effort to utilize the evidence from research as well as studies of development cooperation programs. At the USAID, the evidence-based approach was introduced and utilized at every stage of the Program Cycle, especially in the monitoring and evaluation process.

In accordance with the efforts of the development community in the world, KOICA also has emphasized results-based management (RBM), evidence-based approach, and evaluation at the implementation of development cooperation programs. Based on the analysis of the case studies, this study suggests the strategies to utilize the evidence-based approach in the programs of KOICA as follows: first, the linkage between the evidence and policies should be promoted for the policymaking process; second, it is needed to base and utilize

the evidence in the overall stages of development cooperation programs; third, the capacity of the researchers, evaluators, and statisticians should be enhanced; fourth, the capacity to expand and disseminate the best practices and results of the programs; and fifth, in the stage of implementation, monitoring and evaluation should be emphasized.

With the strategies of utilization of the evidence-based approach at KOICA, this study emphasizes the interaction between the evidence providers and users through an improved dialogue. In addition, by matching demand with supply of appropriate evidence, it is needed to support the utilization of evidence, such as statistics, evaluations, and research, in the work of development cooperation. When the countries are classified into four groups in terms of the utilization of the evidence-based approach in the policymaking process, it is necessary for the countries to move gradually from opinion-based vicious circle countries to evidence-based virtuous circle countries.