Monday, 9 November 2015
“The End of Catching Up With the West and Its Impacts on Education Afterward”
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Through the 1980s, Japanese society underwent epoch making experiences in terms of its mindset. It finally acquired a social consciousness of its own self-image that Japan had completed “catching up with the West (Seiou ni Oitsuki-oikose)”. An official document published by the Ōhira Seisaku Kenkyūkai (Prime Minister Ōhira Masayoshi’s Policy Study Groups) proudly announced the completion of the “catching up with the West” in 1980. Ezra-Vogel’s best-selling book, Japan as Number One, endorsed such a self-image of Japan. The Ad Hoc Council on Administrative Reforms under the Nakasone Cabinet echoed the statements contained in Ōhira’s Study Groups when they discussed education reforms. In what sense did Japanese people in the 1980s recognize that they had completed the catch-up? What has happened in Japanese society after they obtained such a mind-set? What impacts have such narratives of the end of catching up with the West had on education policies in particular? These are the questions I will argue in my presentation at the seminar.

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