Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in Japan

1. What is ESD?

1.1 Basic View and UNESCO initiative

Sustainable development is defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (World Commission on Environment and Development A/42/427 “Our Common Future” http://www.un-documents.net/ocf-02.htm). UNESCO, which says that we must find a way out of our current social and environmental problems and learn to live sustainably, explains education for sustainable development as follows:

Sustainable development is a vision of development that encompasses populations, animal and plant species, ecosystems, and natural resources and that integrates concerns such as the fight against poverty, gender equality, human rights, education for all, health, human security, intercultural dialogue, etc.

Education for sustainable development aims to help people to develop the attitudes, skills and knowledge to make informed decisions for the benefit of themselves and others, now and in the future, and to act upon these decisions.

The United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014), for which UNESCO is the lead agency, seeks to integrate the principles, values, and practices of sustainable development into all aspects of education and learning, in order to address the social, economic, cultural and environmental problems we face in the 21st century. (http://www.unesco.org/en/esd/)

1.2. Rio to Johannesburg; Bonn to Tokyo

UNCED (United Nations Conference on Environment and Development), Earth Summit, was held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992. The summit, known as the Rio Summit, convened to address urgent problems in environmental protection and socioeconomic development. The summit adopted Agenda 21 to achieve sustainable development in the 21st century. Economy, society and environment were mentioned as components for sustainable development.

The Johannesburg Summit, held in September 2002, declared a collective responsibility to advance and strengthen the interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars of sustainable development, economic development, social development and environmental protection at the local, national, regional and global levels. The Japanese government spoke of the importance of human resources for sustainable development and proposed, along with NGOs, a Decade of Education for Sustainable Development with financial supports. In December 2002, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 57/254 to put in place a United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UNDESDE 2005 to 2014) and designated UNESCO to lead the Decade. DESD was launched in 2005. As a follow-up to the UNESCO Global Action Plan on DESD, the Japanese government held a liaison conference among ministries of foreign affairs, agriculture, economy, transportation, environment and education initiated by the Cabinet Office of Prime Minister and drew up the Japanese Action Plan on DESD in March 2006.

In Bonn in April 2009, UNESCO and the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, in cooperation with the German Commission for UNESCO, hosted the World Conference on
Education for Sustainable Development - Moving into the Second Half of the UN Decade. The conference developed mechanisms for enhanced cooperation in the implementation of the UN Decade, especially focusing on the exchange between developing countries, those in transition and industrialized countries.

The Japanese Commission for UNESCO, together with United Nations University and Asia-Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO, held The International Forum on ESD Dialogue 2008 as the mid-point event of DESD in December 2009. "[T]he international community has discussed the needs, fundamental concepts and objectives of ESD, while recognizing key concerns for future generations. For the mid-point of the UN Decade, UNESCO and its Member States will have opportunities to discuss the achievements and challenges of implementing the DESD. The International Forum on ESD Dialogue 2008 will move beyond these efforts to define ESD, and seek to identify strategically conceptualized actions for the implementation and achievement of DESD objectives in line with the International Implementation Scheme (IIS) (http://www.mext.go.jp/english/unesco/010/08101401.htm)."

“Learning for a Sustainable World: Review of Contexts and Structures for Education for Sustainable Development 2009” was published in December 2009 as a review of the ESD activities and studies at local, national, regional and international levels and of future directions and issues. The review also looks at the potentials of the ESD practice and research development for the second half of the UN Decade. Japan is going to host the final UNDESD conference in 2014 as the end of the UN Decade. All the practitioners, researchers and policymakers will take part in the conference.

1.3. Significant Meanings of ESD

There are many “adjectival” educations, such as environmental education, human rights education, peace education, gender education, global education, HIV education, multicultural education and so on. Environmental education (EE) is one of the long-lasting and most popular ones. EE depends on each country’s background and influences contemporary ESD activities.

The general understanding about ESD in Japan is that ESD differs from traditional EE in the way that teachers and students change their own lifestyles, values and behavior beyond knowledge transfer, simply for the protection of nature. Researchers are dealing with more social and cultural aspects of the human-made environment (in addition to the natural environment) in both formal and non-formal education. It could be said that Japan had laid the groundwork when ESD started, because the school curriculum had already included “Integrated Studies,” or interdisciplinary/cross-curricular lessons, in 2000.

2. ESD in Japan

2.1. Formal School Education: “Integrated Studies” and “sustainability” in curriculum

“Integrated Studies” was introduced in the Japanese school curriculum from primary to upper secondary school levels in 2000 before the resolution on DESD was adopted in 2003. This is not an independent subject but integrated lessons across subjects. It covers topics across traditional subjects and allows for implementation of instruction and learning activities related to education for the sake of international understanding, information education, environmental education, health and welfare education, and other educations. The knowledge and skills are developed by integrated learning activities whose content is based on students’ personal interests. Teaching hours are currently at 105 (Grade 3 & 4) and 110 (G5 & 6) in primary school (http://www.mext.
This topic of Integrated Studies serves as a foundation for ESD. In order to advance ESD activities effectively, the programs in Integrated Studies should be linked comprehensively and promoted continuously to learning activities. To assure this, the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) supports: 1) the formulation of the Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education, which identifies ESD as a critical component; 2) the revision of Courses of Study to allow for ESD topics to enter various subject areas; and 3) the expansion of the UNESCO Associated School Network (ASPnet) (UNESCO 2009).

Although the Integrated Studies hours decline in the recent curriculum reform, ESD practice survives in various other subjects because the new Course of Study mentions sustainability, which provides the foundation of ESD in school. Asia-Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU) introduce good examples of the practices in a Guide to Developing and Using ESD Materials (http://www.unesco-school.jp/index.php?action=pages_view_main&page_id=510). It collects 13 good ESD practice, explains a common approach to ESD and justifies with competency which students and adults would obtain through the practice. The National Federation of UNESCO Association in Japan also assists the fund for school ESD programs (http://www.unesco.jp/contents/help/esd.html).

Course of Study, the national curriculum standard, mentions a “sustainable society” in some subjects such as social studies, science and moral education. Course of Study sets the content and goals of instruction so that school teachers can design their lessons based on the aforementioned “sustainable society.” In addition, foreign language activity will be a compulsory lesson for primary school from April 2011, and therefore, some teachers and scholars may find good opportunities to blend ESD practice with English lessons.

2.2. Organizations out of School

The ESD concepts are so wide that its practices are not always limited to school campuses. UNESCO introduced strong initiatives for ESD practice taken by private and/or nongovernmental stakeholders. UNESCO’s report revealed that there was little content in typical informal and non-formal education practices from the whole world survey (UNESCO. 2009. http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001849/184944e.pdf). Active collaboration and cooperation between schools and non-official providers are sometimes very important for significant learning in ESD.

Although Japan has not accumulated the experiences enough yet either, academic societies promote activities and research on ESD. For example, the Japan Association for International Education leads the interactions between researchers and social science teachers, and the Japanese Society of Environmental Education has a good relationship with science teachers. Both academic societies actively publish articles on ESD in their journals.

There are more movements for research and development (R&D) at the private sector. Development Education is quite a common concept for both local actors and school teachers who deal with international education: The teachers, students and civil organizations constantly hold joint projects and workshops for better practice. One of the most active organizations is the Development Education Association and Resource Center in Japan. For ESD-domain activities,
ESD-J is one of the largest NGOs, and takes initiative for cooperation among civil organizations, officials such as the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Environment, and practitioners.

2.3. **ASPnet (UNESCO School Network) toward 2014**

Because the Japanese education system has been strong in the formal education sector for its development in the present as well as throughout history, we should focus again on the roles of formal schools, even for ESD, which needs to be applied in both formal and non-formal education. ESD becomes a central theme of their activities.

Within the formal school framework, leading schools are identified as UNESCO Associated School Network (ASPnet) by MEXT in Japan. Their learning activities focus more on ESD than others, so MEXT is willing to enhance the network. The number of ASPnet schools has been rapidly growing (Fig.1), especially after 2008, because that was the year that MEXT set ASPnet schools to generate ESD (Japanese National Commission for UNESCO, 2009, *About UNESCO School and ESD*). The Japanese National Commission for UNESCO located in MEXT expects the number of ASPnet schools to increase to 500 to become the local centers for ESD school practice in 47 prefectures in Japan before the end of the Decade.

![Fig. 1. Number of ASPnet Schools in Japan](image)


Some remarkable practices have been observed in ASPnet. For example, the whole school approach is undertaken in a Tokyo school and local people and students’ parents actively participate in school activities, thanks to a strong initiative by the principal. In Osaka, ASPnet has had long relationships with other networks, such as the East Asian network, while overcoming historical difficulties, and the Baltic Sea Project (www.b-s-p.org) for international communication. “World Heritage Education” is common for many schools in Nara Prefecture, in which many UNESCO World Heritage are located. Local cooperation among education boards and schools in the ASPnet framework around Sendai, northern Japan, and the schools in Hokkaido incorporate the native people, called Ainu, into their curriculum for cultural diversity.
3. Issues in Japan

3.1. Evaluation and Monitoring

It is a common and tough issue for all educators today to identify visible outcomes of students’ learning activities. The outcomes of ESD share the same concern as learning evaluation. There is no exact set of quizzes for students to go through for ESD activities. MEXT promotes the concept of “ikiru chikara,” or competency for living (zest for living), as the whole goal of school education in Japan. ESD is defined as “education to make actors who can build a sustainable society (MEXT 2010).” The competency MEXT wants students to obtain very much overlaps with the concept and outcomes of ESD activities. Therefore, the evaluation needs to be conducted by the whole-view of the student. There are, however, limitations of evaluation even though many academics and teachers attempt it.

3.2. Final UNDESD Conference in Tokyo 2014

The Japanese government declared that it would host the final UNDESD Conference at the end of the UN Decade in 2014. All of the Japanese organizations will coordinate to hold the conference and welcome all other countries and regions that deal with ESD activities formally and non-formally. The government starts to coordinate between MEXT, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and so on within the official organizations.

3.3. Networking across country and within local areas

There are three network levels in Japan by and large: international, national and local. As the first one, ASPnet is typical. More than 250 schools are certified as ASPnet school. In addition to ASPnet, there are small-scale international networks. Osaka ASPnet, for instance, includes both ASPnet member and non-member schools and has originally networked with China, the Philippines, Republic of Korea and Thailand. Some of the Japanese member schools also have communicated and participated in the Baltic Sea Project student conference. The United Nations University-Institute of Advanced Studies (UNU-IAS) also promotes Regional Centres of Expertise (RCE) across Japan. The national network is strengthened by higher education institutes called “Univ-net.” The eight universities assist the ESD program development at the local school level and exchange the information between local areas in Japan. The local cooperation is also very active. Because of the increase of ASPnet schools, communication at member schools has started in Nara, Osaka and Kanazawa, for example.

For further information:

ACCU (Asia-Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO)
http://www.accu.or.jp/jp/en/theme/esd.html

A Guide to Developing and Using ESD Materials

The Baltic Sea Project
http://www.b-s-p.org

Development Education Association and Resource Center
http://www.dear.or.jp/eng/
ESD-J
http://www.esd-j.org/e/

Japan Association for International Education
http://www.kokusairikai.com/

Japan Environmental Education Forum (JEEF)
http://www.jeef.or.jp/english/

Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT)
ASPnet: Associated School Project Network (Japanese)
http://www.mext.go.jp/unesco/004/005.htm
Integrated Studies: Sogoteki na Gakushuu no Jikan (Japanese)
http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/sougou/main14_a2.htm
Japan/UNESCO Partnership Project (Japanese)
http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/hyouka/kekka/08100105/004/108.htm

Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Johannesburg Summit 2002: The World Summit on Sustainable Development
http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/environment/wssd/

Japanese National Commission for UNESCO
http://www.mext.go.jp/english/unesco/
The International Forum on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Dialogue 2008
Mid point event of DESD
http://www.mext.go.jp/english/unesco/010/08101401.htm
ASPnet: Associated School Project Network
http://www.mext.go.jp/english/unesco/003/005.htm
About UNESCO School and ESD (Japanese)

Japanese Society of Environmental Education
http://wwwsoc.nii.ac.jp/jsoee/english/

National Federation of UNESCO Association in Japan
http://www.unesco.jp/en/

NIER International Symposium on Education Reform 2005
http://www.nier.go.jp/symposium/jouhou20050326/e.pdf
Sustainable Development and Education for the 21st Century: What We Can Do Now for the Children of the Future - An Educational Paradigm Shift –

UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs Division for Sustainable Development
http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/

UN Documents: Gathering a body of global agreements: Sustainable Development
http://www.un-documents.net/k-001303.htm

UNESCO ASPnet in Japan
UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development (Bonn)

UNESCO UN Decade of ESD
UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development
http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001416/141629e.pdf
Review of Contexts and Structures for Education for Sustainable Development 2009

UNESCO Bangkok Office
http://www.unescobkk.org/education/esd/un-decade-of-esd/international-implementation-scheme/
ESD International Implementation Scheme (IIS)

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
Rio Declaration on Environment and Development

United Nations University—Institute of Advanced Studies
Regional Centres of Expertise (RCE)

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日本の ESD (Japanese Outline)

1. ESD とは
1.1. 基本的概念と UNESCO イニシアチブ
   ・ UNESCO を中心とした国際教育の変遷略史
   ・ ESD の定義
1.2. 環境サミットから持続可能な開発への議論
   ・ リオ・サミットからヨハネスブルグへ
   ・ ESD の 10 年ボン中間年会議から東京最終年会議へ
1.3. ESD の重要性
   ・ 環境教育はじめとする〇〇教育との関係

2. わが国の ESD
2.1. 学校教育：総合的な学習の時間、学習指導要領にみられる持続可能性
   ・ 総合学習とは
   ・ ESD 教材ガイド等の実践事例
2.2. 学校外の組織
   ・ 関係学会と教員の自主研修
2.3. ユネスコスクール
   ・ ユネスコスクールの動向
   ・ テーマ別の実践事例

3. 現在の課題
3.1. 評価・モニタリング
   ・ ESD と学力
3.2. 東京で予定されている 2014 年最終年会議
   ・ 様々な関係者間の協力体制
3.2. 全国におけるネットワークと地域社会内における連携
   ・ 国際的ネットワーク
   ・ 国連大学等の地域センター制度
   ・ ユネスコスクールと大学の協力