Current Climate of ESD in Japan

1.1 What is ESD?

The UNESCO initiative of sustainable development is defined as development that meets the demands of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (NGO Committee on Education, 1987). 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 (ESD) as follows: sustainable development is a vision of development that encompasses populations, animal and plant species, ecosystems, as well as natural resources, and that integrates concerns such as the fight against poverty, gender equality, human rights, education for all, health, human security, intercultural dialogue, and so on. Education for sustainable development aims to help people develop the attitudes, skills, and knowledge required to make informed decisions for the benefit of themselves and others, now and in the future, and to act upon these decisions.

1.2 History of ESD

The 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 twenty-first century. Economy, society, and the environment were mentioned as components of 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 local, national, regional, and global levels. The Japanese government stressed the importance of human resources for sustainable development, and proposed, along with some NGOs, a Decade of Education for Sustainable Development with financial support. 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 (UNDES 2005 to 2014), and designated UNESCO to lead the Decade. DESD was launched in 2005.

Initiated by the Prime Minister’s Cabinet Office as a follow-up to the UNESCO Global Action Plan on DESD, in March 2006 the Japanese government held an inter-governmental conference with the ministries of foreign affairs, agriculture, economy, transportation, environment, and education, and drew up the Japanese Action Plan on DESD. 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, focussing especially on the exchange between developing countries, those in transition, and industrialised countries. The Japanese Commission for UNESCO, together with the United Nations University and the Asia-Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO, held the International Forum on ESD Dialogue 2008 as a DESD mid-point event in December 2009. 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 ESD activities and studies at local, national, regional, and international levels, as well as of future directions and issues. The review also looks at the potential of ESD practice and research development for the second half of the UN Decade.

Japan hosted the final UNDESD conference in 2014 to end the UN Decade. A diverse group of practitioners, researchers, and policymakers took part in the conference. This led to the establishment of the Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development (GAP-ESD) to further accelerate and promote ESD. As one of its advocators, Japan has been taking a holistic approach to the advancement of ESD by collaborating with public, civil, and private sectors as well as local schools and communities. The national plan for GAP-ESD was launched in March 2016, and Japan has been one of the leading countries to implement GAP-ESD since then. The second section will introduce trends in current ESD activities based on a report on the national plan for GAP-ESD, which was jointly issued by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) and the Ministry of the Environment (MOE) in 2017. The following section will also introduce a number of UNESCO Associate schools as concrete examples of ESD activities in Japan.

1.3 Japan and UNESCO Associate schools

One striking aspect of Japan and ESD is the proliferation of UNESCO Associate schools. UNESCO Associate schools do not exclusively promote and implement ESD; their aim is to build defences of peace in the minds of children and young people, which also means reaching target 4.7 on Global Citizenship Education (GCED) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) of Sustainable Development Goal 4 - Education 2030 (UNESCO, 2019). Any public or private educational institution that provides pre-primary, primary, secondary, technical, or vocational education, or teacher training, in a formal or non-formal setting can be a UNESCO Associate school. Membership is based on a firm commitment by the school’s leadership and community to promote the ideals and values of UNESCO by reinforcing the humanistic, ethical, cultural, and international dimensions of education.
Member schools are key promoters of UNESCO values and the integration of international perspectives into schools. They volunteer to contribute to the development of innovative educational content, to pioneer new teaching methods and learning approaches, to interact and collaborate with other members, and to build partnerships with different stakeholders to improve their practices and become agents of change in their communities. All members undertake multidisciplinary projects related to peace and human rights, sustainable development, global citizenship, and intercultural learning.

Currently, there are over 1,000 UNESCO Associate schools in Japan, whilst Germany has 223, the UK 101, South Korea 108, and the USA 52. The number in Japan is significantly higher than in other countries, which shows Japan’s commitment to creating a sustainable society including ESD.

![Number of UNESCO Associate schools in each country](image)

Figure 1. UNESCO Associate Schools Network, (2019). Member schools graph created by author.

Japan also has a unique award scheme for UNESCO Associate schools/projects that achieves outstanding outcomes. This award is funded by the Japanese government and can be given to any UNESCO Associate school/project around the globe. In 2018, three projects from Namibia, Indonesia, and Estonia were selected (Japanese National Commission for UNESCO, 2018a).
2. Three trends in Japanese ESD activities

Trends in recent Japanese ESD activities can be categorised into three areas: activities in schools, activities developed from Environment Education (EE), and activities not yet recognised as ESD. All of these share a common feature in that the activities are often carried out with local communities (Ministry of the Environment, 2017).

2.1 Activities in schools

Many ESD activities are held in schools, particularly in the Period for Integrated Studies (sougouteki na gakusyu no jikan). 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. Integrated studies is not an independent subject; rather, it refers to integrated lessons across subjects. It covers topics across traditional subjects and allows for the 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 types of education. Knowledge and skills are developed by integrated learning activities whose contents are based on students’ personal interests (Maruyama, 2010). The Course of Study (2011) defines integrated studies as follows:

[The Period for Integrated Studies aims] to enable pupils to think in their own way about life through cross-synthetic studies and inquiry studies, while fostering the qualities and abilities needed to find their own tasks, to learn and think on their own, to make proactive decisions, and to solve problems better.

Teaching hours are currently 70 hours a year for each grade in primary school, 50 hours in grade 7, 70 hours in grades 8–9, and 87–174 hours in grades 10–12 (Working Group for Living Environment Studies and Period for Integrated Studies, 2015).

In order to enhance ESD activities effectively, the activities in Integrated Studies should be linked comprehensively and promoted continuously within learning activities. Although the Integrated Studies hours were reduced in the recent curriculum reform, ESD practices survive in various other subjects because the new Course of Study includes sustainability, which provides the foundation of ESD in school. The Course of Study, the national curriculum standard, mentions a ‘sustainable society’ in subjects such as social studies, science, and moral education. The Course of Study sets the contents and goals of learning so that schoolteachers can design their lessons based on the aforementioned ‘sustainable society’ (Maruyama, 2010).
2.2 Activities developed from Environment Education (EE)

In Japan, there has been a long and rich history of EE in various settings (schools, local areas, families), and together with the establishment of the Law for Enhancing Motivation on Environmental Conservation and Promoting of Environmental Education in 2013, the importance of EE has become more evident. Thus, many institutions choose to do ESD classes/projects with environment-related themes. According to a survey carried out in 2016, almost 80% of the educators dealing with ESD answered that the EE should be the priority in ESD (MEXT, 2016), as shown in Figure 2.

New networks and platforms were created to promote these activities under the guidance of MOE and MEXT. One example is the ESD Support Centre, which provides various kinds of support for any organisation or institution doing ESD, such as creating materials for activities and organising forums to exchange information. The centre’s Steering Committee for ESD acts as a supervisor for local promotion centres and any organisations supporting and/or implementing ESD. In collaboration with local centres, these organisations can function as promotion bases for ESD (ESD Support Centre, 2019).

The ministries, in collaboration with private organisations, also organise workshops and lectures to share EE knowledge and skills with a larger audience (Japan Education Environment Forum, 2018).

![Image](image.png)

**Figure 2. MEXT (2016).**

What should be the number one theme for ESD?

- Environment: 77.0%
- International understanding: 68.7%
- Human rights/Peace: 61.7%
- Disaster prevention: 54.2%
- Energy: 39.4%
- Life and consumption: 33.6%
- Welfare: 32.5%
- Heritage sites: 30.8%
- Food education: 30.1%
- Biodiversity: 27.0%
- Poverty: 24.6%
- Climate change: 21.5%
- Global Citizenship: 18.8%
- Eco-Park: 12.2%
- Geo-Park: 7.7%
- Others: 8.5%
2.3 Activities not yet recognized as ESD

There have already been many projects and activities that can be labelled as ESD activities in Japan. As the Course of Study already mentions ESD values, many schools have incorporated ESD without acknowledging that their activities can be defined as ESD (e.g., EE activities). Not only schools, but also private companies and community centres (kouminkan) are in the same position (e.g., as part of CSR). In order to raise awareness, MOE and MEXT created a manual for promoting ESD in 2018 (Japanese National Commission for UNESCO, 2018b), and also organised the UNESCO School Convention (ESD Support Centre, 2018).

Community centres conduct a variety of activities traditionally initiated and executed by local actors, which are now incorporated into the ESD scheme. For example, in Okayama, the first convention of community centres on an ESD theme was held in February 2018. The theme for one of the sessions was ‘Creating a society where youth who have creativity and energy can contribute and take an active role’. Led by a locally based NPO, the participants engaged in a discussion on how they could create such a society, including how to effectively use community centres (Okayama ESD Navigation, 2018). These elaborate and passionate discussions show how community centres have now realised that they were already organising ESD activities and have been playing an important role in disseminating and enacting ESD.
3. Examples of ESD activities

This section presents three unique and outstanding UNESCO Associate schools as illustrative cases. They include a public primary school, a public junior high school, and a private junior-high school that showcase how ESD is prevalent on different levels and in various kinds of schools in Japan. The introduction and general framework of ESD in each school will be described first, followed by explanations of activity content and the schools’ unique features.

3.1 Nagatadai Primary School

3.1.1 Introduction and framework

Nagatadai Primary School is a public school located in Yokohama City. The school was one of the first UNESCO Associate primary schools in Japan, and the first one registered in the city in 2010. The school has nearly 500 students and 30 faculty members, and promotes ESD in collaboration with Sacred Heart University in Tokyo, which is renowned for its ESD research department. The motto of the school is ‘Nagatadai, where each student gets the spotlight: Cooperation-Uniqueness-Independence’ (Nagatadai Primary School, 2019). Based on this, the school developed its own framework, especially for its ESD activities.

As the figures above show, the central theme of ESD in the school is ‘self-respect’, which ultimately connects to creating a society where children feel happy about being born and the elderly feel happy about living a long life. This framework was developed by the former principal.
of the school, Sumida. In his book *Creating a Colourful School*, Sumida emphasizes that ESD is ‘life education’ (*inochi no jugyou*). The backbone of ESD is ‘caring for others’ and the idea that everything is connected to life around us, including nature and people outside our schools and families.

Sumida (2019) also highlights that ESD cannot bring about an overnight transformation, but rather needs to be disseminated gradually and step-by-step, starting from the realisation that ESD is connected to what one is already doing. He calls this the ‘maple leaf approach’: a bottom-up approach that starts with a change of awareness of ESD amongst teachers, after which they develop their own ESD ideas and practices. This process creates ESD that is sustainable in itself.

1. The ESD concept is not yet integrated in school activities
2. ESD activities are event-based
3. ESD activities are intentionally incorporated in the form of XYZ Education
4. Sustainability is found in subject teaching
5. Sustainability is found in the cross-subject curriculum. ESD is carried out holistically.
6. Sustainability is prevalent in the entire school
7. ESD spreads to the local community and society centring around the school.

![Diagram](image)

3.1.2 Activities

In terms of life education, a turning point was the devastating 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake. Reflecting on the disaster, Nagatatadai 5th-grade students decided to have an ESD themed activity on disaster prevention. Seeing what had happened in the affected areas, students expressed their view that it is a miracle that they are alive and that life cannot be taken for granted.

The students first decided to research the types of prevention already carried out in the local areas, and discussed problems and solutions in relation to this. Based on this, students had meetings with their families and locals that resulted in the creation of local hazard maps. From this experience, students acknowledged the importance of being connected to not only their school and family but also to their local community, and that helping each other is crucially important in life-threatening situations (Nagatatadai, 2012). This activity was presented at the EcoPro exhibition, which had 100,000 entries, including ESD projects from universities, NGOs, and other organisations. This created in students a sense of accomplishment and belonging (as participants)
in society. The school currently executes many other ESD activities, such as inviting guest speakers to discuss the micro-plastic issue, and arranging agricultural experiences in collaboration with the local community. For these achievements, the school received the 6th ESD prize in the primary school division (Japan ESD Promotion Forum, 2015).

3.1.3 Unique features

As seen above, ESD in Nagatai is not only about students, but also families and the local community. Sumida emphasises that the teacher is a crucial actor who should be given autonomy in class planning and management, and also that school leaders need to have a leadership style that does not suppress but effectively utilises the opinions and will of teachers. Just as students need to feel confident in doing ESD activities, teachers’ well-being and comfort is important in implementing ESD. The school developed a number of measures for this purpose, such as setting up workshops for better time management, involving teachers to a greater extent in decisions about the yearly school curriculum, and conducting surveys for work improvement. As TALIS\(^1\) and other research point out, the working conditions for Japanese teachers are not so good. One piece of research has revealed that the average break for teachers in primary and junior high schools is 10 minutes for the entire day.\(^2\) Therefore, the Nagatai survey gathers ideas from teachers on how to improve working conditions, such as having shorter and more regular meetings and integrating multiple school newspapers into one. Thanks to these efforts, questionnaires distributed a year after the reforms started show that almost 80% of the teachers felt that their working conditions had improved (Wada, 2017).

\(^1\) http://www.oecd.org/education/school/talis-2013-results.htm

3.2 Ageo Higashi Junior High School

3.2.1 Introduction and framework

Ageo Higashi Junior High School is a public school located in Saitama Prefecture with 660 students and 44 teachers and staff. The school joined the UNESCO Associate school network in 2010. In 2015, the school was selected as a Research and Development School (RDS) by MEXT. RDS schools are allowed to organise their curriculum more freely outside of the National Curriculum.

With this opportunity, Ageo Higashi Junior High School created a new subject called Global Citizenship (GC), which is a fundamental element of ESD. All students participate in GC class for one to two hours every week. The three main goals for this new subject are 1. raising the social/political awareness of youth as the voting/adulthood age is lowered to 18 years old (from 20 years old) in Japan; 2. nurturing sustainable leaders in society; and 3. enabling students to acquire skills to collaborate with others from various backgrounds. In order to achieve these goals, the school has the following learning approach.

The students began by learning what ESD is and what issues it involves before setting their goals. Based on this, they began developing ideas and engaging with fundamental questions such as ‘Why does this happen?’ Finally, the students acted on their questions by conducting interviews with organisations outside the school and carrying out literature research.

The cycle occurs in every grade and for every project throughout the year, but ‘Knowing’ is emphasised in year 1, ‘Thinking’ in year 2, and ‘Acting’ in year 3.

Figure 5. Ageo Higashi (2018a).
Based on this learning circle, each grade’s curriculum and goals are set. The figure below shows the broad goals of the GC curriculum that the school developed for 2nd-year students last year.

- **Prepare for vocational training experience**
  - thinking about the connections between jobs-
- **Realising sustainable society**
- **How to achieve SDGs**

Figure 6. Ageo Higashi (2018a).

According to this, the school had appropriate ESD activities considering the progression of students. The content of the curriculum, such as the themes of activities, is student-led and teachers help students to facilitate learning (Ageo Higashi, 2018a).

### 3.2.2 Activities:

For example, the 2nd year students first engaged with discussing the definition and contents of ‘sustainability’ before deciding the topic for their projects. Last year, students completed various projects on varying ESD themes, from ‘The future with robots and AI’, ‘Climate change’, ‘Peace-building’, and ‘Creating a stress-free society’ to ‘Thinking about being ethical with the convenience store’. One class chose the theme ‘Creating a stress-free society’ and was divided into seven smaller groups that each chose one sub-topic, such as ‘Deepening our understanding of transgender’ and ‘What we can do for Rohingya refugees from Japan’. Each group researched and discussed issues connected to their themes. This also included a visit to related organisations such as MEXT and the UNHCR Association Japan office (Ageo Higashi, 2018b).

Before presenting their projects to the public, the students have a whole-class discussion on possible solutions to issues discovered in their projects. Through this activity, students internalise ESD issues as their own and also nurture a sense of ownership, critical thinking, creativity, communication, and various other skills (Ageo Higashi, 2018a).
3.2.3 Unique features

As seen above, ESD activities usually aim to improve so-called ‘soft skills’ (e.g., communication skills); with such activities, progress and assessment are often up for discussion. For this, Ageo Higashi conducted their own research with questionnaires.

The results indicate that students studying GC are more confident, autonomous, and optimistic about changing the future through their public engagement than most other students in Japan. The percentage of Ageo Higashi students who answered ‘I very much think that my public engagement can change society’ was 13.6% in 2016, and increased to 24.5% in 2018. It is impressive that only a year after the implementation of GC, the percentage of students is higher than the Japanese average, and its doubling in 2018 tells us that GC has been effective for teaching ESD.

The difference becomes even more visible if we combine ‘I very much think so’ and ‘I think so’. Whilst the Japan average was 37.4%, the Ageo Higashi percentage was 61.5% in 2016 and 68.8% in 2018. Moreover, Ageo Higashi is vigorously conducting other research to visualize the effectiveness of GC.

Building on these excellent results of making GC as a subject, Ageo Higashi Junior High School decided to have a whole-school design based on GC last year. In this design, for example, the 1st year students take part in a workshop on the theme of international cooperation, food, water security, and other topics at the beginning of the school year, and the rest of the subjects are taught in line with the GC themes and the students’ progress. For instance, in English class, students begin by learning about recycling, which is then followed by learning about food festivals around
the world. In social studies, world climate, history, and economy are taught with the intention of fostering skills in international cooperation, problem-solving, and analysis for the creation of a sustainable society. A similar design was devised for all three grades with slightly different themes, but with all focusing on a sustainable future based on the teachings in GC.

This attempt is worth consideration because in Japan the concept of whole-school curriculum management is still in development (MEXT, 2015). Therefore, together with many other schools that also execute curriculum management based on ESD themes, this attempt by Ageo Higashi Junior High School could serve as an example to any school, especially UNESCO Associate schools.
3.3 Shonan Gakuen Junior and Senior High School

3.3.1 Introduction and framework

Shonan Gakuen Junior and Senior High School is part of a comprehensive private education institution that runs from kindergarten to high school. The school was established in 1933 and has approximately 200 students. Shonan Gakuen is managed by parents and teachers, and there is no school owner (gakkou rijichou). This progressive school was registered as a UNESCO Associate school in 2013. The school slogan is ‘Nurturing students to have personalities, good health, and dignity so that they can contribute to society and also have skills and optimism for the future’. With this slogan, ESD values function as the root of the whole school’s activities, as shown in the tree below.

The unique and special ‘Shonan ESD’ was implemented in the Period for Integrated Studies in accordance with student progress from the 1st year of the junior high school to the last year of senior high school. Students start by getting to know their identities and then their local communities before engaging with global issues (Shonan Gakuen, 2018).
3.3.2 Activities

Shonan ESD has aims of sustainability and nurturing students who can practise ESD in society. To engage with society, the school has set up 13 crowdfunding projects on various ESD themes. This is to realise and practice PBL (Project/Problem Based Learning), which enhances students’ autonomy in learning and gives them opportunities to be exposed to other values and experiences of working as a team, hence directly connecting their learning to society. Through this, ESD becomes not only theory but also actual practice for the students. The projects vary from cleaning the beach nearby and raising awareness about recycling to cultural exchanges between Japanese and Lithuanian youth. As Japan frequently suffers from natural disasters, there is also a project to support disaster-affected areas. One on-going project, ‘Choco Pro: Saving children with chocolates’, aims to combat child labour by raising awareness through movies and fundraising with fair-trade chocolate so that the students can eventually send supplies to children in need (Shonan Gakuen, 2019a).

Along with these projects, the school also organises other ESD activities. One such activity in 2018 was the school’s participation in the Japan–China–Korea Youth Cultural Festival, which was held in Beijing. Students from three countries gathered to discuss sustainable society. In particular, they talked about how AI would influence people’s education, everyday life, and safety in the future. It seems that the students acquired and deepened many ESD values and skills through this trip. It appears that the Japanese students were impressed by the presentation skills and language proficiency of other students (especially Chinese students), as they were able to give speeches confidently without any script. Other students were of the impression that despite the political conflicts among the three nations, participants were purely interested in each other’s cultures, and everyone had an understanding of their respective cultures (Shonan Gakuen, 2018). From this experience, the students acquired and enhanced their communication skills, intercultural understanding, and knowledge on AI and its relation to sustainable society.

3.3.3 Unique features

Another distinctive aspect of ESD at Shonan Gakuen Junior and Senior High School is the newly established ESD entrance exam starting from this year. The school accepts a quota of
students based on their interests in ESD. Applicants are required to submit a 90-second home-made video explaining what they did in their primary schools and activities/projects they want to participate in if they are accepted to the school. After submitting the video, applicants are required to complete a written test that asks them to think about, discuss, and generate possible solutions to a given ESD theme. The test does not ask for deep or detailed knowledge on ESD, but rather asks for ideas and opinions regarding ESD (Shonan Gakuen, 2019b).

This section introduced a number of examples of ESD activities in Japanese schools. However, as mentioned in the beginning, there are over 1,000 UNESCO Associate schools in Japan and many other non-associate schools also already engage with ESD activities. Therefore, it should be noted that ESD is extensively more diverse than what is shown here, and further reports should cover other unique activities.
4. Concluding Remarks

Although these activities look progressive and promising, there are certain issues concerning ESD school activities. A survey conducted by the Asia-Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU) in 2014–2016 illustrates that the key is the teachers and staff members.

**Reasons why ESD is difficult to spread**

- **Teachers lack ESD understanding**
  - 2014: 75.5%
  - 2015: 67.7%
  - 2016: 62.8%
- **The ESD concept is too broad and difficult to understand**
  - 2014: 48.7%
  - 2015: 57.7%
  - 2016: 67.3%
- **Not enough time for teachers and staff to do ESD**
  - 2014: 49.0%
  - 2015: 47.3%
  - 2016: 43.0%
- **Cannot secure enough study time for ESD**
  - 2014: 43.0%
  - 2015: 44.3%
  - 2016: 42.8%
- **The effectiveness of ESD is difficult to discern**
  - 2014: 38.3%
  - 2015: 35.7%
  - 2016: 40.4%
- **Teachers and staff do not know how to implement ESD**
  - 2014: 35.7%
  - 2015: 37.7%
  - 2016: 38.9%
- **There is no financial support to promote ESD**
  - 2014: 29.5%
  - 2015: 40.1%
  - 2016: 28.8%
- **It is unclear what materials should be used**
  - 2014: 17.2%
  - 2015: 19.1%
  - 2016: 13.5%
- **There is no ESD department in the Board of Education**
  - 2014: 19.1%
  - 2015: 11.6%
  - 2016: 11.6%

Figure 9 shows that the primary reason in all three years regarding the difficulty of spreading ESD is a lack of understanding about ESD amongst teachers. The second greatest reason in 2016 was that teachers and staff do not have enough time to implement ESD, which was also the third greatest reason in 2014 and 2015. In 2014 and 2015, the second greatest reason was that ‘The ESD concept is too broad and difficult to understand’, which actually improved over the three years despite the primary reason remaining unchanged. This suggests that although teachers are now more familiar with the term, they are still not confident enough to speak about or carry out ESD. Other indicators suggest that teachers and staff need improved working conditions (e.g., working hours and financial support) to make time for ESD.
According to semi-structured interviews with teachers in the example schools in section 3, the trend seen in the graph is still valid in 2019. All the schools have similar issues, which can be categorised into three areas: teachers, connections outside of school, and the curriculum.

4.1 Teachers

One of Nagatadai’s concerns is the teacher rotation system. In Japan, teachers who work in public schools are rotated within the municipality (Numano, 2017). Due to this, it has been difficult to pass down any practices that are built up in schools, and ESD is no exception. ESD activities that one teacher considers good practice are not necessarily thought of in the same way by a new teacher, thus creating an incoherent understanding of ESD. Therefore, a bottom-up process is adopted in Nagatadai to disseminate ESD, so that issues and problems in schools are discussed among teachers first, after which these problems are connected to ESD.

At Ageo Higashi, the vice-principal had the same concerns about the teacher rotation system, and also about the lack of training opportunities for teachers; in order to make teachers ‘facilitators’ and ‘coordinators’ of ESD classes, more workshops and meetings are needed. Furthermore, the chief teacher proposed that in order to create better ESD activities, it is important to generate good questions and learning units for ESD based on advice from various specialists outside of the school.

A senior teacher at Shonan Gakuen Junior and Senior High School stated that one of the most important things to do to encourage the spread of ESD is to familiarise teachers with the term. Although the school was registered as a UNESCO Associate school five years ago, it is only recently that ESD has started to be discussed amongst teachers without awkwardness. He also mentioned that because ESD is so broad, every teacher has a different conception and interpretation of ESD, and sometimes these different perspectives can collide. For instance, a science teacher would regard EE as the component of ESD that should be given primary focus, whilst a social study teacher would regard this to be Peace Education.

This illustrates that teachers’ understanding of ESD is key to expanding ESD, which was also shown in the survey results. There is a need for more training opportunities and chances for teachers to develop mutual understanding.

4.2 Connections to outside school

Another issue seen in all the schools is the connection to outside school. For Nagatadai, it is crucial to foster collaboration with the local community and others outside the school. In order to help children be curious, active, and independent learners, it is desirable for them to have long-term and consistent contact with and activities involving organisations/people outside of school.
One-off activities can be helpful, but continuous support from the local community is key to nurturing students who can initiate and discover something new in learning.

The vice principal at Ageo Higashi also stated that having smooth connections with organisations outside of the school is key. Schools occasionally outsource the whole of their ESD activity, with the result that the school or teachers do not become as involved as they should; however, for Ageo Higashi, collaboration between the community (society) and the school is one of the goals of the school’s sustainable ESD activities. Therefore, there is a need for a coordinator who works with a focus on connecting the worlds inside and outside of the school.

Shonan Gakuen also expressed that in order for students to be equipped with multiple perspectives, they need to be in contact with people outside of the school who can inspire and motivate them in the context of ESD activities. This is the reason the school does projects with local communities and other organisations outside of the school, as discussed in the previous section.

4.3 The Curriculum

Lastly, teachers at the three schools expressed the difficulties of ESD curriculum management. As mentioned previously, Nagatadai has some difficulties with making a clear ESD curriculum because of the teacher rotation system. A new principal has arrived, and the school is now in the process of creating new school goals and frameworks. Adopting a bottom-up approach, the school is trying to live up to its motto, incorporating ESD values and activities into the curriculum. The new principal stated that making a clear plan using a bottom-up approach is time-consuming and tedious, but that the very process of creating a grand vision together with everyone is itself ESD.

Ageo Higashi attempted, for the first time, to create a whole-school curriculum based on GC last year; yet, there are still some subjects that are not clearly connected to GC. The vice principal stated that cutting across all subjects centring on GC is not only making the ESD activities sustainable, but also has effects of deep learning and other explorative types of learning in all subjects.

Shonan Gakuen also acknowledges the importance of curriculum management, which is why they appointed ten teachers from grades 7–12 as a ‘Committee for promoting ESD’ to discuss ESD once a week. This committee holds meetings on ESD curriculum four times a year to consider how ESD can be better incorporated into other subjects.

As ESD is a flexible concept, issues such as ESD framework, assessment and evaluation, and improving the working conditions of teachers need to be discussed. Moreover, the above illustrates how a coherent understanding amongst school staff, good connections with
communities outside of the school, and curriculum management are crucial for the further improvement and expansion of ESD activities. Any public or private support systems/organisations should look not only to large-scale surveys but also to qualitative data, in order to capture real experiences and opinions that will help to find a way forwards. As the GAP-ESD is ending this year and there is a concrete discussion on whether to change ESD to ESDGs (Education for SDGs), it is important to reflect on the ESD definition and framework, as well as its activities, contemplating what is really needed to achieve the goal of creating a sustainable society and world.

Asuka Ohagi
6 February, 2019
References


21


日本での最近のESDの動向（記述の要点）

1. ESDの定義と歴史、UNESCOスクール

ESDとは、環境、貧困、人権、平和、開発などの現代社会の課題を自らの問題として捉え、身近なところから取り組む（think globally, act locally）ことにより、それらの課題の解決につながる新たな価値観や行動を生み出すこと、そして、それによって持続可能な社会を創造していくことを目指す学習や活動を指す。ESDは環境教育（Education for Environment）を起源としており、1992年の地球サミットを皮切りに、本格的に行われてきている。特に2002年のヨハネスブルクで行われたサミットでは、日本が2005年から2014年までを「国連持続可能な開発のための教育の10年（DESD、Decade of Education for Sustainable Development）」と提唱し、これが国連総会において満場一致で決議され、2015年にはESDのためのグローバルアクションプラン（GAP-ESD）が採択された。日本ではGAP-ESD国内実施計画が2016年に公表され、その後、ESD活動支援センターの設置等ESD拡大の動きは広まり、現在ではESDを実施するUNESCOスクールが国内で1000校を超え、世界一となっている。

2. ESDの最近の動向

環境省が公表した2017年の報告書によると、日本での最近のESDは1.学校教育、特に総合的な学習の時間で実施されるESD2.環境教育（EE）より発展したESD3.まだESDと認知されてはいないが、既に実践されているESDの3つのカテゴリーに分けられる。

3. 実際のESD活動

では、実際の学校教育でのESDとはどのようなものだろうか。3つの学校（公立小学校、中学校、私立中高一貫校）の①ESDに関しての枠組み②実際のESD活動の様子③校のESDに関する特徴的な取り組みを例としてみてもみると、どれに関しても三人三様ではあるが、それぞれの考えるESDを目標しそれを実現する総合的な学習の時間で取り入れ、また学校内外の活動だけでなく、学校外との連携（地域コミュニティー等）も実施しているという点は共通であった。

4. むすび

以上を踏まえて、ESDの現在の課題をみた時に、3つの改善点が挙げられる。一つ目は、ESDを指導する教員がその概念を明確に理解すること。二つ目は、外部との連携を促進すること。三つめは、学校のカリキュラム・マネジメントをうまくESDと連携させること。である。2019年2月現在、ESDのためのグローバルアクションプランが終了を迎え、国連のUNESCOは世界各国の専門家と共にポストGAP-ESDの草案を作成している。草案では、ESDではなく、Education for SDGs（ESDGs）を目指すべきではないかという意見も出ており、今後のESDの枠組みや概念、実際の活動を見直し、国連の目指す持続可能な社会・世界を作る上で本当に必要なものは何かを今、見極めることが重要なのではないだろうか。