Global circulation and local manifestations of education for sustainable development with a focus on Japan

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Abstract: While the practice of what is called education for sustainable development (ESD) is increasing, there is no consensus on its precise definition. This article investigates the emergence of particular understandings of ESD and explores its implications for the local implementation of the United Nations Decade of ESD with a focus on the case of Japan. From the perspectives of sociology of education and comparative education, some of the dominant uses of the term ESD will be examined. The challenges will be discussed for a progressive reconstruction of education and society towards a more sustainable future.

Keywords: education for sustainable development; ESD; United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development; DESD; environmental education; EE; Japan.

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1 Introduction

Chapter 36 of Agenda 21 (United Nations, 1992) is dedicated to discussing the importance of education, training and public awareness in addressing the challenges of sustainable development (SD). Ten years after Rio Summit, a proposal to launch the

United Nations (UN) Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) was made during the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg (WSSD) in 2002. The international recognition of education for sustainable development (ESD) as an important new field is marked by the start of the UN DESD in 2005 and the launch in 2007 of the *Journal of Education for Sustainable Development*, an international academic journal dedicated to research on ESD. While scholarly attention to, as well as the practice of what is labelled ESD is increasing, there is no consensus on the precise definition of ESD. Much has been written on the significance of ESD by the lead agency of the DESD United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and environmental education (EE) experts, and documentation of the historical background of ESD (Hopkins and McKeown, 2002) and normative discussions of ESD principles abound.

Instead of delineating 'four thrusts' of ESD as identified in Chapter 36 of Agenda 21 (i.e., improving access to quality basic education, reorienting existing education programmes, developing public understanding and awareness of sustainability, and providing training) or defining what ESD should be, this article investigates the emergence of particular understandings of ESD, highlighting ESD advocates' recognition of the contributions made by many 'adjectival educations', including EE, and other forerunning educational initiatives and influential educational and social movements and practices. Rather than reiterating the rationale and urgent need for ESD, this paper will identify some of the dominant uses of the term ESD in a particular country in light of international normative ESD discourses. Inquiry into local experiences of ESD is crucial in addressing the need for 'locally relevant and culturally appropriate' ESD, as emphasised in the International Implementation Scheme of DESD (UNESCO, 2005b). The study delineates contextual issues that complicate efforts to implement ESD locally, with particular reference to the ways in which local meanings are deployed in the construction of ESD in Japan. It also discusses the potentials and limitations of ESD in overcoming challenges of a progressive reconstruction of education and society towards a sustainable future.

2 Methodology

2.1 Clarification of the purpose and significance of the study

This article does not intend to provide an exhaustive account of emerging understandings of ESD in different parts of the world, for such an undertaking lies far beyond the scope of a single article. Rather, this paper will sketch a broader picture of mainstream Japanese thinking on ESD against the background of the international (D)ESD discourse. The term 'international (D)ESD discourse' is employed to distinguish it from diverse and multiple discourses surrounding sustainability and education. There is a rich body of literature to be consulted if we were to outline what different people say about what education and learning for a sustainable future should look like, but this article is not an attempt to put forward another normative view on the topic of education and sustainability. Instead, by spelling out what processes and practices the term ESD is used to describe in Japan, the study will articulate locally-specific meanings and nuances that have been attached to the normative concept of ESD as defined by

UNESCO (and other leading international 'ESD experts' who have contributed to standardising the international ESD discourse). In a sense, it is a case study of 'inculturation' of the global ESD doctrine. By exploring how the concept of ESD has been locally constructed, this article intends to point out potential positive impacts of the international normative model of ESD upon local practice as well as to develop effective critiques of the international (D)ESD discourse.

A focus on Japan is justified on the following three grounds. Firstly, since a proposal to start DESD was jointly made by the Government of Japan and a consortium of Japanese NGOs at the WSSD in 2002 and subsequently included in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, Japanese officials, scholars, NGOs and other groups and individuals have discussed the nature and scope of ESD extensively for the past five years. This makes it possible to examine what processes and practices the term ESD is used to describe in Japan. In addition, although there is a wealth of Japanese language literature on ESD, it is little known outside of Japan due to the language barrier. This article thus serves to disseminate Japanese thinking on ESD to advance the international debate on ESD. Finally, since the government of Japan is promoting DESD through national initiatives such as model ESD projects and substantial financial contributions to UNESCO and the United Nations University (UNU), Japanese thinking on ESD is hypothesised to have international resonance directly through Japanese 'best practices' of ESD and indirectly through the work of UN agencies, especially in the Asia-Pacific region[1].

The case of Japan will be employed in the current study as a starting point for the ongoing debates about the nature and contents of ESD. Much writing on ESD has either posited ESD as a moral imperative and asserted its unquestionable desirability or called into question its desirability and validity. There has been resistance to accept ESD from environmental educators who view ESD as discrediting, diluting or corrupting EE, and some authors have fiercely criticised and wholeheartedly discredited ESD[2]. Given that the international community has already committed itself to DESD through the UN General Assembly decision to launch it and substantial resources have already been mobilised, however, what is needed now is not the EE/ESD debate but to scrutinise how the practice of what is called ESD is being constructed in the context of DESD.

For a long time, interdisciplinarity has been recognised as central to addressing the complexity and cross-cutting nature of the challenge of SD. If we are to take a call for interdisciplinarity seriously, it is not sufficient to discuss the emergence of ESD exclusively from an EE perspective. The goal of this article is neither to encourage the reader to subscribe to ESD nor to discredit it altogether. Rather, it is to clarify theoretical and normative attempts to define ESD practice in order to transcend self-serving disciplinary debates surrounding it. As such, the article attempts to analyse the functioning of what is labelled as ESD in a particular context rather than to reflect on what it should be. It does so by looking at it from a combined perspective of critical discourse analysis, institutionalism in the sociology of education, and critical thinking in comparative education as explained below.

2.2 Conceptual framework

Starting from the premise that language and discourse construct, regulate and control knowledge, research and scholarship in the tradition of critical discourse analysis

influenced by the work of Michel Foucault (Luke, 1997; Ninnes, 2004), this article pays close attention to recurrent key words and statements that appear across texts on ESD and comprise recognisable patterns of ESD knowledge and practice. Discourse governs not only what can be said but also what can be done in the name of ESD. While there is a lot of work critically examining the concepts of 'development' and 'sustainable development', there is little, if any, research looking into how the concept of ESD comes to be inflected with particular meanings and nuances and associated with particular practices. This article will identify and critique aspects of ESD discourses that are considered 'common sense' and taken for granted.

This study is about the ways in which ESD is discussed by international and Japanese 'ESD experts'. It therefore focuses mainly on two bodies of literature. First, it reviews major international organisations' seminal work on ESD to identify dominant conceptualisations of ESD. Given the vast quantity of literature that could be consulted with regard to education and sustainability, this review will be selective and limited. It focuses mainly on UNESCO and IUCN publications that are in the public domain. Second, this article reviews writings published in Japanese academic journals' special sections or issues on ESD (Table 1).

Another important premise of this article is that ESD discourse and practices are culturally embedded. The global circulation and local manifestation of educational ideas, policies and practices has been a prominent subject of research in the fields of comparative education (Arnove and Torres, 1999; Steiner-Khamsi, 2004) and neo-institutional study in the sociology of education (Meyer et al., 1977, 1992; Chabbott and Ramirez, 2000). Both neo-institutionalist thinking in sociology and critical thinking in comparative education do not view the apparent global convergence of educational models as 'the triumph of optimal educational strategies' [Ramirez, (2003), p.252]. While neo-institutionalists posit the existence and functioning of a 'world culture' emphasising progress and justice that powerfully affects nation-states and other actors, comparativists are interested in examining local adaptation of global educational models and de-contextualisation and re-contextualisation processes of educational imports.

This article adds to a larger ongoing debate between convergence theory (world culture theory) and divergence theory of education principles, policies and practices. Chabbott and Ramirez (2000, p.175) argue that discourse about education and development enables the emergence of networks of experts and international organisations, who, in turn, 'sharpen and standardise the discourse by coordinating activities that showcase discourse'. The current study takes a position that there is convergence of ESD discourses at the international level following the institutionalist view, while highlighting changes over time of the UNESCO conceptualisations of ESD and local manifestations of the concept of ESD from a comparative education perspective. Emphasising the power of actors and the notions of agency and interests in the tradition of critical thinking in comparative education, this study explains some components of the mainstream ESD discourses – international and Japanese – by reference to intents and motivations of certain actors such as UNESCO and scholars and practitioners of forerunning 'adjectival educations' (e.g., EE, development education, adult education and non-formal education).

Table 1 Japanese academic journals' special issues and sections on ESD

Journal title	*Publisher*	*Volume (year)*	*Title of the special issue or section*
Development Education Title in original: 別冊「開発教育」 *(Bessatsu Kaihaysu Kyōiku)*	DEAR (Development Education Association and Resource Center)	Supplementary volume (2003)	'Learning for sustainable development' Title in original: 持続可能な開発のための学び (Jizoku Kanō na Kaihatsu no tame no Manabi)
Rural Culture Movement Title in original: 農村文化運動 *(Nōson Bunka Undō)*	Rural Culture Association	172 (2004)	Special issue 'United Nations decade of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)' Title in original:「国連　持続可能な開発のための教育 (ESD)の10年」—私はこう考える (Kokuren Jizoku Kanō na Kaihatsu no tame no Kyōiku (ESD) no Jū-nen—Watashi ha Kou Kangaeru)
International Understanding Title in original: 国際理解 *(Kokusai Rikai)*	Institute for International Understanding, Tezukayama Gakuin University	36 (2005)	Special section 'Proposal for international understanding and education for sustainable development' Title in original: 提言 国際理解と持続可能な開発のための教育 (Kokusai Rikai to Jizoku Kanō na Kaihatsu no tame no Kyōiku)
Studies in Adult and Community Education Title in original: :日本の社会教育 *(Nihon no Shakai Kyōiku)*	JSSACE (Japan Society for the Study of Adult and Community Education)	49 (2005)	Special issue 'Social education and lifelong learning under globalization' Title in original:「グローバリゼーションと社会教育　生涯学習」第三部 持続可能な開発のための教育 (Globalization to Shakai Kyōiku/Shōgai Gakushū, Dai-San-Bu Jizoku Kanō na Kaihatsu no tame no Kyōiku)
Rural Culture Movement Title in original: 農村文化運動 *(Nōson Bunka Undō)*	Rural Culture Association	182 (2006)	Special issue 'Towards sustainable 'regional development' and 'human resources development' – an interim report on integrated research on the United Nations decade of education for sustainable development (ESD)' Title in original: 持続可能な「地域づくり」「人づくり」に向けて—「国連　持続可能な開発のための教育 (ESD)の10年」の総合的研究 中間報告 (Jizoku Kanō na 'Chiikizukuri' 'Hitozukuri' ni Mukete—'Kokuren Jizoku Kanō na Kaihatsu no tame no Kyōiku (ESD) no Jū-nen' no Sogōteki Kenkyū Chūkan Hōkoku)

Central to both Foucauldian and institutionalist thinking is how the widely-held, taken-for-granted ideas work in ways that cannot be explained by reference to any individual's or group's intents or motivations. Whereas such a meta-level analysis of the emergence of the ESD discourse as reflecting and shaping a 'world culture' or the larger legitimating blueprint for 'development' is an intriguing one, the project of this paper is not to critique the ESD discourse as an integral part of the broader rationalising discourses about human subjects and communities. It requires another study to investigate where the ESD discourse converges with and diverges from the larger development discourse, especially the global discourses surrounding the millennium development goals (MDGs) and the education for all (EFA) movement, which is based on the notions of 'education as a human right' and 'education as human capital investment' (Chabbott and Ramirez, 2000).

3 Dominant conceptualisations of ESD and their local manifestations

This section will review UNESCO publications on ESD and DESD and conceptual writings on ESD by 'international ESD experts' who have contributed to standardise the ESD discourses. Following this, selected Japanese literature is discussed in light of what can be identified as 'four pillars' of the tenet of ESD:

1 ESD as an upgraded version of EE

2 ESD as an umbrella term supplementing forerunning education initiatives and programmes

3 ESD as a community development process

4 ESD as lifelong learning.

The goal of this section is to delineate different uses and meanings of the term ESD and to identify what processes and practices the term is used to describe.

3.1 ESD as the upgraded version of EE

Expanding EE into ESD is often identified as a major challenge of promoting ESD, especially in the Asia-Pacific context. For example, in the 'Introduction to A Situational Analysis of ESD in the Asia Pacific Region' [UNESCO Bangkok, (2005a), p.3] the Director of UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education writes that 'ESD is still predominantly conceptualised by many key stakeholders and decision-makers in the context of EE' and argues that '[moving] from EE to ESD will be a key challenge for the decade'. The formulation of this challenge itself clearly speaks to UNESCO's assumption about ESD as having its origin in EE.

Much writing on ESD spends much space discussing the relative meanings of EE and ESD (Hesselink et al., 2000; Fien and Tilbury, 2002; Bhandari and Abe, 2003; McKeown and Hopkins, 2007). As González-Gaudiano (2005, p.244) succinctly puts it, 'One de facto problem that the implementation of the [DESD] faces is that apparently only we environmental educators have become involved in debating its pros and cons'. Ironically, the very fact that international advocates and promoters of ESD feel compelled to argue that ESD is 'not' synonymous with EE vividly demonstrates that the common perception

is just the opposite. The persistence of 'EE and ESD debate', to borrow McKeown and Hopkins' (2007) words, gives further support to the dominant conceptualisation of ESD as an extension of EE.

Accordingly to Nitta (2004), there are two dominant ways to understand ESD in Japan. One perspective sees ESD as a combination of many different 'adjectival educations' as shown in the equation (1), and the other perspective sees EE as constituting the basis of ESD as shown in the equation (2) of Table 2. Nitta (2004) views both perspectives as limited in that there is no real effort to break away from conventional EE. Here, Nitta significantly diverges from Bhandari and Abe (2003, p.23), who write that 'no significant difference exists between EE and ESD' and 'ESD and EE are synonyms'. Bhandari and Abe (2003, p.23) argue that 'ESD is the advanced form of EE' and point out the need for upgrading EE to make it into ESD, but they do not see the necessity of dramatic departure from what they see as the current EE paradigm. These divergent views held by the prominent ESD advocates in Japan can be attributed partly to differences in their assessment of the current situation of EE[3].

Table 2 Two dominant images of ESD in Japan

1	ESD = EE + development education + human rights education + peace education
2	ESD ≈ EE

Source: Adopted from Nitta (2004, p.39) (translated by the author)

While Abe (2004) argues that three different types of EE – EE that mainly addresses the natural system (nature-based EE), EE that mainly addresses the life system (e.g., recycling education, energy education) and EE that mainly addresses the global system – are converging to form holistic EE as 'sustainable community development' ('jizoku kanō na chiiki zukuri') since the 1990s, Nitta (2004) sees Japanese EE as still stuck at a less advanced stage of development. In his overview of the history of EE in Japan, Nitta (2004) summarises the historical background, nature and scope and pedagogy and education methods of first, second and third-generation EE (Table 3).

Pointing out a current situation in Japan where experience-based nature learning or nature-based EE is used as a synonym of EE, Nitta (2004) argues that the emergence of ESD challenges Japanese EE to rediscover society. In Nitta's view, the mainstream Japanese EE today (second-generation EE in Table 3) largely avoids the question of societal transformation through political action. Similar concerns are shared by the most influential international ESD experts like John Fien, who played a major role in developing UNESCO's multimedia teacher education programme Teaching and Learning for a Sustainable Future (UNESCO, 2002a; see http://www.unesco.org/education/tlsf/). Fien has repeatedly pointed out that nature-based EE is limited as the foundation of ESD and called for more attention to the humanities and social sciences. For example, while acknowledging the important contributions made by '[educators] in botanic gardens, museums and other non-formal learning centres' and 'television documentaries and the media in general', Fien (2004, pp.109–110) writes that 'a minority of these remain restricted to a narrow, nature-based EE approach'. In Fien and Tilbury's (2002, p.9) view, concerns of ESD significantly diverge from '[concerns] of litter, nature study and the planting of trees in the school grounds and other apolitical and aesthetic work that has often been the focus of much school-level EE in the past'.

Table 3 Overview of the history of EE in Japan

	Historical background	*Nature and scope*	*Approach, pedagogy, educational methodology*
First-generation EE	Emerged in response to negative consequences of rapid economic development during high economic growth period (mid 1950s to early 1970s)	Pollution education	Teaching/lecture of the identified problem (pollution)
		Nature conservation education	Observation-based didactic approach
Second-generation EE	Emerged in response to heightened interest in the global environment and the recognition of the value of a natural environment (late 1980s, especially in 1990s)	Experience-based nature learning	Strengthening 'the sense of wonder' and a sense of community approach
Third-generation EE	Emerged in response to the decision to launch DESD (since 2002)	EE for creating sustainable society	Holistic, collaborative approach that aims at (alternative) policy proposal and advocacy

Source: Adapted from Nitta (2004, pp.35–36) (translated by the author)

Although there are differences in the assessment of the current situation of EE, there seems to be a consensus among ESD advocates in Japan and elsewhere that ESD must aim not only at individual behavioural change but also at societal transformation and that ESD cannot be taught or practiced in the apolitical context. Abe (2004), who assesses Japanese EE rather favourably, argues that, ESD should aim not only at transformation of individual lifestyles but also at transformation of political, economic and social systems. In a much more critical assessment of Japanese EE today, Nitta (2004) argues that mainstream EE in Japan has become boring because it tends to be limited to aiming at bringing about individual behavioural change either by sending a clichéd message of low-impact nature-based activities in the case of experiential nature learning or by repeatedly exhorting individual learners to make efforts in the areas of energy and water conservation, separation of waste and recycling.

Various constituencies place differing interpretations on ESD, but all such interpretations turn around the kinds of competencies different interests feel education should cultivate in learners to create a sustainable future. When perceived as efforts to overcome the limitations of EE as practiced today, ESD tends to be posited as education that develops civil capacity for participation in community-based decision-making. Writing on EE and ESD in the context of globalisation, for example, Asaoka (2005a, p.537) sees the role of the upgraded version of EE – in his words, 'EE which has reached the level of ESD' – in supporting educational and learning opportunities inherent in environmental grassroots movement. From the perspective of development education, Tanaka (2005) points out the importance of cultivating knowledge and skills to

participate in broadly-defined public policy such as 'machizukuri' (community development) in order to upgrade EE into ESD. Similarly, Nitta (2004) sees the important role of ESD in providing educational opportunities to realise participatory democracy and characterises ESD as new citizenship/civic education which empowers learners to become active citizens and instruments of good governance to create a sustainable future.

Many 'qualities' that supposedly characterise ESD seem to reflect efforts to overcome the past paradigms of EE that are 'science focused/obsessed, based on the management and control of nature and human/earth dualisms, and devoid of social, political, cultural, or emotional dimensions' [Clover, (2000), p.214]. While Japanese ESD advocates like Osamu Abe (2004, 2005, 2006), Kazuhiro Nitta (2004, 2005a, 2005b), Yukihiko Asaoka (2005a, 2005b), and Haruhiko Tanaka (2005) (whose main fields are EE, civic education, adult education, development education, respectively) emphasise social and political dimensions, there is a group of Japanese supporters of education for sustainability who emphasise the cultural and emotional dimensions. This group can be represented by those who work in the traditions of alternative education, holistic education, spiritual education and Steiner education (Japan Holistic Education Society, 2006).

3.2 ESD as the umbrella term supplementing forerunning education initiatives and programmes

The idea that ESD is a movement that coordinates and integrates forerunning educational initiatives and programmes characterises the international normative model of ESD as presented in various UNESCO publications (UNESCO 2004, 2005a, 2005b; Fien, 2004). There are two aspects to this idea of ESD as a coordinator of forerunning education initiatives and programmes. One aspect is the idea that ESD supplements forerunning global education campaigns of EFA and the UN Literacy Decade (UNLD), and the other aspect is the notion of ESD as the umbrella term which supplements various 'adjectival education' programmes. For example, DESD International Implementation Scheme (IIS) emphasises the importance of basic education and contributing to MDGs and the EFA movement as well as of 'building upon the learning from years of environmental, health, peace, economic, human rights and development education networks around the world that for many years have used innovation to deliver valuable services in difficult situations' [UNESCO, (2005b), Annex 1, p.14].

While the DESD discourse clearly recognises the importance and validity of various adjectival educations as forerunners of ESD, it vacillates wildly on its commentary about topics and themes to be addressed by ESD. Although the finalised IIS (UNESCO, 2005b) does not emphasise the topic or theme-based approach to ESD, draft schemes (UNESCO, 2004, 2005a) listed 15 topics to be considered in promoting ESD. These 15 strategic perspectives categorised under socio-cultural, environmental and economic perspectives in the draft IIS of January 2005 (UNESCO, 2005a) were reorganised into 'sustainability issues' under 'three spheres of sustainable development' and the intersectional sphere in the final IIS (UNESCO, 2005b). While the draft IIS devoted four pages to explain 15 strategic perspectives, the final IIS avoids making a long list of topics and themes to be covered and instead discusses 'sustainability issues' in one paragraph only. Table 4 lists major topics to be addressed by ESD that are highlighted in draft and final DESD IIS (UNESCO, 2005a, 2005b).

Table 4 Major topics to be addressed by ESD as identified by UNESCO

	'15 strategic perspectives' in draft IIS[1]	
1	Socio-cultural perspective	• Human rights
		• Peace and human security
		• Gender equality
		• Cultural diversity and intercultural understanding
		• Health
		• HIV/AIDS
		• Governance
2	Environmental perspective	• Natural resources (water, energy, agriculture, biodiversity)
		• Climate change
		• Rural transformation
		• Sustainable urbanisation
		• Disaster prevention and mitigation
3	Economic perspective	• Poverty reduction
		• Corporate responsibility and accountability
		• Market economy
	'Sustainability issues' in final IIS[2]	
1	Social sphere	• Employment
		• Human rights
		• Gender equity
		• Peace and human security
2	Environmental sphere	• Water
		• Waste
3	Economic sphere	• Poverty reduction
		• Corporate responsibility and accountability
4	Cross-sectional sphere	• HIV/AIDS
		• Migration
		• Climate change
		• Urbanisation

Source: [1]UNESCO (2005a, pp.19–22) and
[2]UNESCO (2005b, Annex I, p.3, paragraph B)

UNESCO's decision to omit lengthy discussion of topics to be addressed by ESD from the final version of DESD IIS was partly based on its Executive Board's request to shorten the document and the view that DESD IIS is not the appropriate place to discuss what SD issues are. Aside from these considerations, there might have been a consideration to avoid any accusation from the different adjectival education lobbies that have a stake in ESD that IIS presents certain topics as more important than other topics,

and at the same time, to prevent potential ESD stakeholders from shying away from ESD as remote from their concerns or priorities. Since a set of common principles can be easily derived from what different interests feel is required of education to create a sustainable future, UNESCO's emphasis on values and abstract essential characteristics of ESD can be interpreted as a strategic move to build on the common aspirations of many education pressure-groups in the field and the abundant existing undertakings of diverse actors.

ESD faces an ongoing challenge of addressing the holistic and cross-cutting nature of SD without becoming too abstract to be implemented or, to put it differently, a dilemma of addressing every conceivable sustainability issue without compromising the complexity of SD challenges and overlooking important interrelationships among different themes and topics. John Fien's chapter in 'Educating for a sustainable future: commitments and partnerships' (*Proceedings of the High-Level International Conference on Education for Sustainable Development at WSSD*) (UNESCO, 2004) can be seen as representing UNESCO's official view on ESD before a decision to launch DESD was made[4]. In addition to interdisciplinarity, student-centred learning and futures education, Fien (2004, pp.96–114) lists a number of 'adjectival educations' that should be emphasised in reorienting education towards a sustainable future. Eight different educations that Fien feels require special attention in promoting ESD are: education for gender equality, education for citizenship and democratic societies, education for a culture of peace and respect for human rights, health education, population education, education for the world of work, education for protecting and managing natural resources, and education for sustainable consumption.

It is worthwhile noting that Fien (2004) discusses these eight different kinds of education under the heading 'Reorienting Education', separately from the headings 'Basic Education' and 'Education for Rural Development'. The kinds of education discussed under 'Reorienting Education' aim at transforming learners' behaviours and values, rather than simply imparting a fixed set of knowledge and skills, and they are not usually part of the formal educational curriculum. In the Japanese context, these 'transformational educations' and 'adjectival educations' are usually undertaken in the Period of Integrated Study (PIS) ('sōgō gakushū no jikan') that was introduced to all primary and secondary schools in 2002, and Japanese ESD advocates such as Abe (2004, 2005), Nitta (2005a, 2005b), Nagata (2005) and Iwamoto (2006) emphasise the importance of PIS as a framework to promote ESD in formal education. Indeed, PIS carried out in close collaboration with the local community is often equated with 'good practices' in ESD promotional brochures developed by the Japanese Government and the local boards of education (e.g., Wakayama Prefectural Board of Education). Moreover, Japan UNESCO Association states that it expects ESD to be promoted in Japanese schools through PIS (Nagata, 2005).

In response to DESD, a number of academic articles dealing with ESD were published internationally. According to Wright and Pullen (2007), more than 250 ESD articles were published in English-language academic journals in 2005 and the number of journals publishing ESD articles increased from 27 in 1990 to more than 80 in 2005. Nevertheless, the majority of these articles appeared in EE and environment-related journals, indicating that discussion of ESD is virtually monopolised by EE scholars and practitioners in the English-speaking world. Making a contrast to this international trend, in Japan, journals in the fields of development education, international understanding,

rural studies, and adult and community education have dedicated special sections and issues to ESD and DESD (see Table 1). This clearly indicates that there is scholarly interest in ESD from scholars and practitioners of various educational fields in Japan. It also suggests that there are serious attempts in Japan to characterise ESD as the novel movement that coordinates and synergises existing 'adjectival educations'.

These efforts to characterise ESD as the umbrella movement can be partly attributed to the establishment and operation of ESD-J (Japan Council on DESD; see http://www.esd-j.org/), a non-profit networking organisation dedicated to promote DESD. This consortium of NGOs and civil society organisations (CSOs) explicitly aims at developing innovative ways of collaborating among various stakeholders – the national government, local governments, NGOs, CSOs, the private sector, and citizens – to promote ESD, and it has served to support and validate ESD effort across the country since its establishment in 2003. ESD-J is allegedly the first NGO in the nation that networks organisations working on diverse topics such as environment, development and human rights [Abe, (2006), p.39]. As of November 2006, ESD-J had 95 member organisations, and the majority of authors contributed to Japanese academic journals' special issues and sections on ESD are active members of ESD-J.

3.3 ESD as community development ('Machizukuri')

In addition to the celebration of 'locally-relevant and culturally appropriate' ESD, central to the tenet of ESD is the unquestioned desirability of engaging communities in ESD, however it is defined. There is a consensus around the statement 'ESD must be rooted at the local level – starting from and aiming to address grassroots realities' [UNESCO Bangkok, (2005b), p.7]. In Japan, what is labelled ESD has often been promoted in the context of perceived growing disintegration and fragmentation of local communities. On the one hand, ESD is seen as a movement to restore the lost functions of local communities, inclusive of (but not limited to) educational functions. Efforts to enhance school-community partnerships can be understood in this context. ESD is often conceptualised as efforts to enhance community participation in school education or school-community partnerships. Abe (2004) sees one promising entry point of ESD in PIS and encourages the participation of local people, local governments, local businesses and NGOs in school education. In this connection, he has called for the need to enhance teachers' capabilities for coordinating participation of the local community in school activities (Abe, 2004, 2005).

On the other hand, ESD is from time to time conceptualised as a community development process itself. In the Japanese context, in addition to PIS carried out in collaboration with the local community, 'machizukuri' (literally 'town-building') and 'chiikizukuri' (literally 'region-making' or 'development of a region/locality') movements are often cited as 'good practices' of ESD in their own rights. 'Machizukuri' implies community development based on participation and ownership of local people. The rationale for ESD put forward by ESD-J, which can be characterised as the mainstream ESD discourse in Japan, posits 'machizukuri', PIS and forerunning initiatives and movements for educational transformation such as EE and development education as sharing similar competencies which they aspire to cultivate in learners, similar learning methods such as participatory learning and consensus building, and similar values such as respect for cultural diversity and human dignity. ESD-J characterises this set of common goals, common methods and common values as constituting the 'essence of ESD'.

Pointing out that Japan is a country that has exceptionally vigorous community development movements and has instituted PIS in the formal education curricula, Abe (2004) expresses his aspiration to develop ESD activities based on these 'world-class' local practices which precede DESD. While there is an important edited volume looking at 'machizukuri' as community-based organising by citizens to improve the quality of local environment and environmental management processes (Sorensen and Funck, 2007), Japanese 'machizukuri' movements are not widely known outside of Japan. Abe's enthusiastic praise of 'machizukuri' and PIS seems to be in part a reflection of the fact that these supposedly 'good practices' are little-known in the rest of the world and a manifestation of Japan's (hidden) ambition of establishing itself as a leader in the field of ESD.

'Machizukuri' refers to community-based organising by citizens to improve the quality of the local environment. The language of 'machizukuri' values community-based approaches to social change and civil society participation in SD governance. Not all practices labelled ESD in Japan are connected with a local vision of SD with reference to specific local concerns and problems – e.g., Local Agenda 21 (LA21), and this is seen by some ESD advocates as problematic[5]. Citing the successful example of the City of Toyonaka to link ESD efforts with LA21, for example, Nitta (2005a, 2005b) has argued that ESD not connected to LA21 has a danger of turning into ESD for the sake of implementing ESD, not for achieving SD. The June 2005 proposal of the Japanese NGO 'Kaihatsu Kyōiku Kyokai' or DEAR (Development Education Association and Resource Center) encouraged the revision of LA21s from the perspective of ESD as an integral part of its official strategy to promote DESD (Tanaka, 2005)[6].

Many conceptual writings on ESD and case studies of ESD published in Japanese academic journals deal with 'machizukuri/chiikizukuri' and community empowerment, especially in small towns and villages where the problems of depopulation and economic decline are pronounced. When conceptualised as 'machizukuri', ESD is often associated with a learning process to realise participatory decision-making, participatory policymaking, and participatory democracy. The view of ESD as 'machizukuri' seems to be consistent with the DESD IIS [UNESCO, (2005b), Annex 2, p.6] which lists '[building] civil capacity for community-based decision-making' as one of the 'essential characteristics' of ESD.

While the language of 'machizukuri' and the DESD discourse seem to converge, there is a dominant rhetoric which characterises 'machizukuri' movements but is currently underplayed in the DESD discourse and in the ESD-J discourse as well. Internationally, many environmentalists who have a strong sense of international solidarity and a desire for world peace have reproached globalisation as the process of multinational corporations moving their production units around the globe in search of countries with cheaper labour and little or no social and environmental legislation (or no enforcement of consumer, labour and environmental protection laws). Japanese ESD advocates are no exceptions. In September 2003, in its 'requests to UNESCO's Framework for a draft International Implementation Scheme', ESD-J (2003) called for more attention to globalisation:

> "The rapid rise of globalisation has caused decline and collapse of local communities and cultures, as well as changes in the form of employment and domestic industries. …it is therefore necessary to advise people to have some sense of urgency regarding the issue of globalisation in approaching ESD."

A paragraph with similar sentiments against globalisation can be found in the draft IIS that came out in January 2005:

> "Sustainable development is closely linked to processes of globalisation. …In some areas of the world, the effects of globalisation pose a threat to the survival of local communities, particularly of minorities and indigenous peoples, and to the forests and other habitats on which such communities depend. Changing patterns of world trade and production trigger new challenges of migration, settlement, infrastructure, pollution and resource depletion." [UNESCO, (2005a), p.10]

While anti-globalism can be detected in the draft IIS as shown above, there is no mention of globalisation in the finalised IIS. ESD-J also toned down the anti-globalisation rhetoric in favour of a partnership approach that emphasises the importance of engaging the private sector in ESD.

Whereas the 'official' discourses of DESD and ESD-J no longer emphasise the issue of globalisation in approaching ESD, many ESD advocates see local arenas ('chiiki') as central to political and social realignments in the face of larger structural constraints posed by globalisation and expect ESD to contribute to local empowerment. Globalisation is often seen as producing disintegration and fragmentation at local levels, and efforts to create – or rebuild – a sustainable local community tend to have resonances with counter-globalisation movement. In this context, ESD is viewed as efforts to equip local citizens with capacities to resist globalisation. For example, Nitta (2004) clearly states his hope that ESD cultivates problem-solving and policy-making capacities in citizens to counter globalisation. Sharply criticising multinational corporations as contributing to a widening gap between the rich and the poor, Yamanishi (2004) conceptualises local communities as the locus of resistance to globalisation.

Those scholars who think of ESD primarily (but not exclusively) as a tool for communitarian and deliberative forms of democracy (rather than representative democracy) such as Nitta (2004), Yamanishi (2004) and Asaoka (2005a) emphasise learning experiences through direct participation in communal affairs rather than formal education and training. Naturally, such scholars may draw upon the long-standing tradition of adult and community education as a means of empowerment of civil society. Writing on EE and ESD in the context of accelerated globalisation, for example, Asaoka (2005a) points out the importance of building Japanese ESD upon research in the field of 'Shakai Kyōiku' (literally 'social education'; the term has been used to signify adult and community education), specifically referring to the work of the Japan Society for the Study of Adult and Community Education (JSSACE) on literacy education, gender education and multicultural education as having specific implications for ESD. Apparently, the twin principle of 'Shakai Kyōiku' underpinning the 1949 Social Education Law – ensuring the right of every citizen (in particular those who lack a proper school education) to learn and promoting participatory democracy by enlightening people through learning in their own communities – strongly resonates with the principles of ESD. The next section explores the changing practices of 'Shakai Kyōiku', particularly under the newly introduced lifelong learning policy.

3.4 ESD as lifelong learning

While the DESD discourse posits ESD as a lifelong learning process and values non-formal education altogether, Asaoka (2005a) distinguishes between so-called 'formal

social education' (publicly-financed adult and community education) and educational aspects of citizens' movement or grassroots movement, laying his hopes on educational aspects of grassroots movement. This distinction between 'formal social education' and 'non-formal social education' (i.e., citizens' movement) is important in providing an underemphasised perspective in ESD that lifelong learning policy is both an integral part of ongoing decentralisation and 'neo-liberal' reforms and an externally-induced reform which was implemented in a top-down manner. As will become clearer below, 'social education' offered by municipalities came to be equated with leisure-oriented, commodified, self-interest courses.

In Japan, the Social Education Law, instituted in 1949 as a part of the post-World War II education reforms under the US occupation, has promoted non-formal learning in 'Kōminkan' or community learning centre. The Social Education Law aimed at guaranteeing that learning outside formal education be rooted in local communities. The 1972 UNESCO publication *Learning to Be: The World of Education Today and Tomorrow*, also known as the Faure Report, is usually regarded as a pivotal document that articulated 'lifelong education' as an international educational policy framework. The concept of 'lifelong learning', rather than 'lifelong education', became the guiding principle of restructuring education worldwide in the 1990s. In Japanese education administration, under organisational reforms of the Ministry of Education in 1988, the Shakai Kyōiku Bureau was renamed as the Lifelong Learning Bureau and became the head bureau, replacing the School Education Bureau. This suggests that modern nation-states that had shaped and supported modern education systems came to face a new set of social challenges that could not be adequately addressed with the existing policy framework (Makino, 2005). Japan started promoting 'lifelong learning' as a central policy for restructuring its education system and passed the 'Law Concerning the Development of Mechanisms and Measures for Promoting Lifelong Learning' in 1990. While the practice of what is labelled 'lifelong learning' rapidly increased in response to the central government's policy, 'lifelong learning' was often equated with 'social education', and many municipalities simply relabelled the 'social education section' as 'lifelong learning section' (Narushima, 2002).

The Social Education Law was revised in 2001 based on recommendations proposed in the 1996 and 1998 National Lifelong Learning Council's reports. New phrases added to the Social Education Law include 'ensuring establishment of a partnership between the social education system and the school education system' (Article 3) and 'highlighting the development of new family education programs, community volunteering, and experiential learning types of activities among youth' (Article 5) [Narushima, (2002), p.204]. While these phrases strongly resonate with the mainstream ESD discourse, which calls for a partnership between formal and non-formal education, this new development was not necessarily welcomed by social education ('Shakai Kyōiku') theorists and practitioners. The introduction of a 'lifelong learning' policy to the social education framework was seen as undermining the twofold principle of 'Shakai Kyōiku', relegating the role of 'social education' to that of assisting troubled public education and depriving 'social education' of its social progressive objectives to serve the economically disadvantaged and promote participatory democracy. In Narushima's (2002, p.203) words, lifelong learning programs 'have been gradually taking over and, even worse, destroying 'grass-roots' activities and the principles of traditional social education'. In her article discussing the significance and possibilities of ESD from the perspective of

adult education, Oguri (2005) also points out the perceived problem of the destruction of 'social education' practices by citing a Kōminkan director who laments the replacement of Kōminkan activities with 'lifelong learning' and the Kōminkan's inability to serve as a site to promote resident self-governance.

In addition to encouraging local and municipal governments to promote lifelong learning, the 1990 Lifelong Learning Promotion Law also encouraged private businesses to contribute to the development of a lifelong learning society through partnerships with public and non-profit sectors. This new development, which is also reminiscent of the ESD advocates' call for multi-sectoral partnerships, was seen negatively by social education theorists and practitioners as promoting 'commodification' of social education. The fact that the Ministry of Education now allows the private sector to offer Kōminkan courses at commercial rates reflects the international trend where governments are reducing the scope of public welfare provision, including the amount of adult and community education publicly financed, and replacing it with private market. The emergence of 'hobbyist' and 'careerist' lifelong learners (Rausch, 2004) is seen as an unwelcome development by those who regard the 'real' objective of 'Shakai Kyōiku' as providing compensatory learning opportunities for the socially marginalised and promoting participatory democracy, as opposed to meeting the needs of self-calculated, utility maximising individuals in the neo-liberal state. For 'Shakai Kyōiku' theorists and practitioners, then, the implementation of lifelong learning policy in Japan worsened the trend of depoliticisation, delocalisation and commodification of social education.

Much writing in the field of ESD focuses on how education can and should respond to the challenge of sustainability, but it is largely silent on educational responses to the changing nature of the world that have already taken place and that have been institutionalised in many different countries. Globalisation, liberalisation, privatisation, decentralised bureaucracies and corporate managerialism are driving education reform policies in many different parts of the world. One of educational responses to these changes is the institutionalisation of 'lifelong learning'. Yamada (2005) argues that the promotion of lifelong learning policy has served to reduce a governmental responsibility to guarantee the right of people for 'Shakai Kyōiku' and led to the widening of class-based and regional disparities in learning opportunities in Japan. Maehira (2005) makes an important point that 'lifelong learning' itself is a global education movement and argues that the Japanese concept of 'Shakai Kyōiku' is valuable because it is 'not' subsumed under the universalising global movement of 'lifelong learning'. Ironically, while both 'lifelong learning' and ESD are global education movements promoted by UNESCO, Japanese researchers and practitioners have high hopes for ESD as a force that can potentially revive and enhance traditional 'Shakai Kyōiku' practices that they perceive have been weakened by the introduction of 'lifelong learning' policy into Japan.

Most ESD advocates seem to be preoccupied with the question of how education can and should contribute to SD without giving sufficient consideration to educational responses to challenges of globalisation and administrative and fiscal reforms. The policy discourse of ESD usually emphasises progressive social objectives such as equal opportunities, social inclusion, social cohesion, active citizenship as constituting the social dimension of SD. The mainstream discourse of ESD celebrates school-community partnerships as the 'panacea' and exhorts the community to provide supplementary resources voluntarily to public schools, without giving serious thought to the diminished role of the state in financing education – formal education (including higher education) as well as what Asaoka (2005a) called 'formal social education' (i.e., Kōminkan education).

Traditionally, sociologists of education have been concerned with the role of the state in social democratic redistribution of educational opportunities by way of public education and other public services (Torres and Antikainen, 1999; Burbules and Torres, 2000). State-sponsored education systems have been regarded as a means of securing social progress, but the shrinking of the scope of social welfare in favour of 'neo-liberal' market on the part of many governments raises serious doubts about the possibility of achieving progressive social aspirations through ESD as a form of adjectival education – no matter how effective – or 'lifelong learning'–which is, itself, part of 'neo-liberal' reforms.

4 Concluding remarks

Whether ESD is viewed primarily as the upgraded version of EE or as the umbrella term of adjectival educations, some tend to emphasise differences between ESD and other initiatives to characterise ESD as a new, meaningful undertaking. Others underscore that there is much less difference between many forerunning education initiatives and different adjectival education programmes as to what education should aim to achieve. From time to time, both perspectives are evoked by ESD advocates to mobilise as many actors as possible for DESD.

There are inherent tensions between those who view ESD primarily as a form of adjectival education to be mainstreamed in formal educational settings and those who view ESD primarily as a community development process. While the former basically accepts the legitimacy of existing social systems (including education systems) and does not support radical approaches to social change, the latter is interested in empowering individuals to intervene in the processes of predatory globalisation and redirect these forces to advance the project of human liberation, democratisation and social justice. The challenge of ESD is that it is about both understanding and transforming the world in which we live in. Although all ESD advocates are supposedly concerned about 'positive societal transformation', what they mean by it could vary significantly depending on their understandings of ESD.

This article identified four distinct conceptualisations of ESD, but these different conceptions are not necessarily mutually exclusive or competing definitions. Rather, these divergent definitions together constitute the international normative model of ESD, and different dimensions are strategically emphasised to meet the expectations of differing constituencies. To delineate positive potentials of ESD, the significance of the international normative model of ESD seems to emerge out of at least four considerations. Firstly, the importance of such ESD model emerges out of the expectation that ESD might upgrade mainstream EE and serve to transform the values and behaviour of learners for a sustainable future. Secondly, ESD may serve as the umbrella term for many adjectival educations such as development education, peace education, human rights education, and point the way forward for many disparate educational initiatives and movements around the world. Thirdly, ESD could serve as a tool of community development or 'machizukuri' in the Japanese context and enhance community participation in local SD. Finally, the significance of the international normative model of ESD emerges out of the hopes (of adult and community education researchers and practitioners) that ESD might contribute to reversing the trend of commodification, privatisation and depoliticisation of education and learning in the age of accelerated globalisation.

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Notes

1 Not only the government of Japan but also the private sector and NGOs support ESD. For example, see http://www.agepp.net/ for a multi-language online database of 'Asia Good ESD Practice Project' (AGEPP), a project funded by Toyota Motors and coordinated by ESD-J. AGEPP aims to collect and disseminate good practices of ESD in Asian countries.

2 See, for example, a collection of essays critical of ESD that was published in *Policy Future in Education*, Vol. 3, No. 3.

3 Both Osamu Abe and Kazuhiro Nitta are active in ESD-J and express their views on ESD in various settings. Osamu Abe serves as the ESD-J Chair.

4 John Fien's text was prepared for WSSD in 2002, and a preliminary version of this text is available as UNESCO (2002). A shorter version of this chapter was published as Fien (2003).

5 According to Barrett and Usui (2002), Japanese LA21s are interpreted in a restricted sense, emphasising global environmental issues or operating as deliberative extensions to existing mandatory environmental plans. Barrett and Usui identified the failure to create self-sustaining community consultation processes as one of the main constraints in Japan.

6 According to Tanaka (2005), in June 2005, DEAR proposed three strategies to promote DESD:

   a to infuse as many substantive contents of ESD as possible into the new course of study (guidelines for teaching to be revised in the future) and promote the period of integrated study (PIS)

   b to revise LA21s from the perspective of ESD to make them more holistic

   c to promote the Asia-Pacific network of ESD.