

# Participatory Approaches To The Training And Education Of ESD Educators

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## Abstract

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) needs the following components:

- An understanding of human nature, society and the Environment—three ecologies.
- Skills of ‘Me’, ‘You’ and ‘Us’
- Citizenship training

Since the 1970s and through the 80s, our community for global education has seen two major developments in educational methodologies. One is ‘experiential learning’ through activities and another is skill training for self-esteem, communication, and cooperation. These two educational methodologies are based on the participatory approach, through reflections, discussions and sharing between and among the learners. These methodologies are also based on the findings of psychology.

There was another development in the 1970s and 80s in the area of participatory approaches in social development. International agencies, such as the World Bank and the European Development Bank, which support development programs and projects, now promote various participatory methods.

It is on these methods that we can base our training and education for facilitators of ESD. The International Education Resource and Innovation Center (ERIC), a Japanese Non-Profit Organisation (NPO), based in Tokyo, has been focusing on educational facilitators training, including both school-teachers and social educators, since its foundation in 1989.

Since 2000, seminars for training facilitators by ERIC have been structured as follows:

- Introduction to Global Education
- Environmental Education (EE)
- Human Rights Education
- Conflict Resolution
- Community Vision
- Teachers Effective Skills Training (TEST)

These seminars are held over a period of two to three days. All sessions are carried out with participatory approaches. This year, ‘Peace’ has been added on as another theme, taking the total number of seminars by ERIC to seven.

Through these seminars participants are expected to develop the following capabilities:

- Knowledge and experience of activities

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- Understanding and exercise of activity-based program development
- Experience of activity development in cooperation and collaboration
- Experience of collaborative curriculum development
- Skills of 'I', 'You' and 'Us'

It is essential for ESD facilitators to know that the inclusive participation of all is the key to Sustainable Development (SD) and participatory approaches are necessary to make this goal a realistic one.

## **Introduction**

It is only through participation that you learn the skills, needs, effects and limits of participation. Unless you participate, you never learn, since participation is not a theory, nor a mere idea, but a way of life.

And if the participation of all of us, including the socially disadvantaged, poverty-stricken, culturally oppressed, and the physically challenged, is the key to our sustainable future, we have to start with our basic education. Such education for all must provide the chance to learn the skills and attitudes of, the motivation for, and the ideas and values behind participation. We have to realize that the background of participation lies in democracy, justice, ecology, multi-culturalism and human rights.

## **General Education for Educators in Japan**

Participatory approaches in social development have become almost compulsory, and it seems they are recognized as essential tools for planning, enforcing, monitoring and identifying the problem.

Social development workers are trained through participatory approaches. How about general education? How about the training for educators for primary, secondary and higher education? Where and how are they trained for participation and in participatory methods?

Let's look at Japan, for example. Education for educators of primary, secondary and higher level education takes place in universities and colleges. Nearly 80 per cent of the universities and colleges issue educator's licenses— 415 out of 523 in 1996. Roughly speaking, you need 64 credits, which is the equivalent of 16 year-round subjects, or 32 semester subjects. Also, five credits for on-the-job training are required. To actually become a teacher, you have to take exams and be interviewed by municipal authorities or by the respective private schools after you receive a proper teacher's license.

In 1998, a total of 657,496 students graduated from universities and colleges of which, 76,583 acquired a teacher's license. And 145,067 candidates enrolled for teacher's recruitment. Of these, 50,241 were fresh graduates, and only 17,555 of them got jobs. Teaching is a very popular profession. The national universities' special course for teacher training can train about 15,000 per year, but only 2,728 passed the exams. The number of universities and colleges exploded in the 1970s and 80s, but the teacher training course and the education system have not changed very

much in general and the declining ratio of people qualified to become teachers after special teachers' education courses, lowered the interest in the improvement of its curriculum.

The number of teachers at primary and secondary education levels is about a million. If the population dynamics are even, nearly 30,000 new employment opportunities are necessary to fill the loss by retirement. The two areas of content and system have become vital to the issue. Are the 64 credits and allocated subjects providing good educator training and the education needed for ESD? And who teaches them?

So far in Japan, the university credits do not require the students to be trained in the participatory approaches of education. University education is lecture-based. Sometimes hundreds of students attend a class. And the required training and education for those who could teach are not specified.

System-wise, there are three tasks that we need to focus on:

- Recurrent education for the one million teachers
- Initial training and education for 30,000 educators
- Recurrent education for the 30,000 educators at universities and colleges

In conclusion, participatory approaches training and education for educators in general has not yet gained much ground in Japan, even though various global standards for education call for the participation of all.

### **The Three Areas of Participatory Approaches Training and Education for Educators**

Participatory approaches for the training and education of educators have seen major developments during the 1980s, although the idea of experiential participatory learning was already extant in the 1970s. It is not the aim of this paper to track the roots of these participatory approaches, but rather to show how the fruits could benefit the actual training and education of ESD educators.

There are three types of participatory approaches that ESD educators could benefit from:

- Student-centered experiential activities
- Skill training
- Social consensus building methodologies

#### *Student-centered experiential activities*

The first category is the educational background. Rather than the knowledge-based, lecture style, one-way communication, this student-centered experiential learning style has the following merits:

- Experiential learning teaches students to learn from their experience and take actions to improve.
- A student-centered approach indicates to them that they are important members of our society.
- To learn through communication teaches students the importance of and skills for communication.

We all learn from our experiences and apply better ways of doing things everyday. Experiential learning is a structured way of doing this consciously and intentionally as education. Experience, reflection, discovery and application are the four steps the experiential learning style takes.

There are many activity-based educational materials available, and among the best are: ● *World Studies* published in the UK in 1983 by a group of development educators.

● The Project Learning Tree (PLT) textbook compiled by environmental educators and foresters in the USA in 1973.

The reason for choosing these two is that these groups of people are still working on the issue of educator training consistently and systematically. Their principles have proven to be valid. They have two things in common. They both try to teach ‘concepts’ and they both use activities for training educators as well. Trainers for educators are called facilitators.

The activities compiled in these textbooks are designed to teach students important basic concepts to understand the world and the environment. *World Studies* lists 10 concepts and the new version of PLT five. From development education to EE, the core concepts vary, so these sets of concepts could be chosen for the purpose of any curriculum. For example, ESD concepts proposed by DEA, UK, are as follows: interdependence, citizenship, diversity, SD, social justice, values and judgment, and human rights. Another set of ESD concepts proposed by DEFRA, UK, are: interdependence, citizenship and stewardship, needs and rights of future generations, diversity, quality of life, equity and justice, sustainable changes and precautionary approaches, and the uncertainty of actions.

These concepts are the tools to understand the world today and the values and visions we all should share for our common future, although as you can see, these sets differ slightly from organization to organization. It is, therefore, necessary for educators with common subjective locations to agree on a common set of values and concepts.

Categories of activities are developed from the analysis of various aspects of student-centered experiential learning. These include:

- Image mapping
- Contrasting
- Categorizing
- Quadratic axis
- Studying cause and effect
- Prioritizing
- Quantitative analysis
- Studying time
- Studying space
- Indexing
- Creating models and simulations
- Planning the future

If concepts and ideas are presented with visual aids, it is easier for students to understand them.

### *Skill training*

*World Studies* targets 8-13-year olds and PLT targets pre-kindergarten to 6 year-olds. These activities can be shared with people of all ages, and they teach issues, concerns and concepts of

development and the environment. Although the concepts and concerns vary from EE to development education, global education to earth education, there is a common thread—all these teach ‘awareness, attitudes and actions’. International understanding education in Japan fosters the understanding of global issues and encourages action.

These basic skills components could be structured as ‘Me, you and others’—the self, communication and community

- Self-esteem and reflective thinking skills and attitudes can be taught through activities such as ‘positive adjectives’, IALAC, and ‘River of my life’ among others. 7 To know and value oneself is the base for social action and engagement. If a child feels helpless and powerless, it is very difficult for her/him to feel like an important member of the community and society.

- Communication skills help and promote participation. Listening, speaking, understanding and presentation by other means are essential skills for communication, but one of the most important communication skills is conflict resolution. Since each one of us is different in our background experiences, values and logic of thinking, it is unavoidable that we differ from each other, and therefore, conflicts occur. Skills for conflict resolution are necessary to maintain relationships, and keep lines of communication open. Assertion training, active listening, peer counseling, and peer mediation are some of the skills needed for conflict resolution.

- Skills for the community are a part of citizenship education. Starting with the development and nurturing of a sense of community, we have to educate our next generation to improve and to innovate. Therefore, the ability to identify problems, advocacy, policy-making, decision-making and monitoring are essential community oriented skills. Believing in the development of our society and the idea that change for the better is possible, is essential for us to participate in the process of social development. As Susan Fountain says, the main skill is cooperation. And it can be taught to even a small child. Another important skill is advocacy.

‘From awareness to action’ education covers such activities as: research, drawing conclusions, propagating, reporting and advocating. Teachers in Japan, especially at the secondary level, are afraid of allowing students to get involved with social issues, therefore advocacy skills are neglected, as well as general citizenship education at that level. To create awareness of the fact that citizens are legally entitled to participate in advocacy activities would be a great step forward.

All these skills can be taught through participatory approaches.

### *Consensus Building*

The World Bank's *Participation Handbook* introduces about 40 tools to promote the participation of the public in development planning, project implementation, monitoring and appraisals, and decision-making. There are a number of methods to choose from for each phase, from the fact-finding phase to implementation and beyond. In other words, participation is ensured from the very beginning to the post-implementation phase in terms of methodology.

Why should these methods be incorporated in the ESD educators’ training and education? We have

to remember that the daily enforcement and improvement of ESD is almost always carried out by a group of educators, at school, in the community, and at work. Hardly ever is an educator singled out to bear sole responsibility for ESD. Since ESD educators work in teams it is necessary to train them to work cooperatively as a team to make decisions and solve problems.

For example, a community of educators has to agree on the set of concepts and values that they wish to share with their students. They have to agree to a syllabus, a curriculum, a sequence, a program and a schedule. And they have to agree on what each of these technical terms actually means. Even when most teaching could have been done with the officially approved textbooks, there was a lot to debate in the schools. Now that there are no formal textbooks for EE, human rights education, and ESD, a community of educators should be equipped with team work skills, especially when you consider the fact that the community around the school is not a small one with common goals, but a diverse, contradictory one with high mobility.

The World Bank *Participation Sourcebook* [Participation Handbook] classifies four categories of participatory approaches:

- Cooperative decision-making workshop methods
- Cooperative decision-making for the local community
- Approaches for consultation with /among stakeholders
- Social analysis

### *Proposed Training and Education Programs*

The curriculum for the ESD facilitators' training and education has three areas. The first one involves the purpose, goals and visions of ESD. The second is the knowledge and understanding of children, students and participants—the targets of ESD. The third is the knowledge and skills of participatory approaches, both educational and social.

ERIC provides training and education seminars and learning facilities for facilitators of ESD. It started in 1989 as a center for the promotion of participatory learning and teaching in global education through seminars and the publication of textbooks. The global issues ERIC covers are in accordance with the UNESCO, 1974 recommendation: human rights, environment, peace, inter-cultural understanding, development and the future. It is the only center that trains educators in such a wide range of global issues through participatory approaches.

ESD is an education in global issues and must include development education, EE, peace education and human rights education. But it must go beyond mere inclusion—it must integrate these issues so as to enable insights into and visions of a sustainable future, as well as creating a readiness for action.

Facilitator training seminars based on global issues began in 2000. Each seminar lasts for two to three days, and the series of seminars covers in all, a period of 15 to 18 days. One day consists of three two-hour sessions, which is the equivalent of 1 semester credit at college and university. So these seminars are the equivalent of 15 to 18 credits in training and education.

The issues should cover ESD related areas, as for example, in 2000, the themes were as follows:

- International understanding and global perspectives
- EE and community development
- Human rights education, education as, about, through and for human rights
- Conflict resolution and responding to conflicts in the community
- Development education and international cooperation
- TEST: Teachers Effective Skills Training
- Peace education, transcending conflict, and reconciliation (This module was added in 2004.)

### *Conclusions*

All the issues related to ESD can be taught through student-centered experiential learning and teaching methods, usually called ‘participatory approaches’. In order to prepare the students for democratic civil society, educators are expected to be models of civil participation.

Educators in Japan are still trained through lectures, as university professors have not been retrained with new methodologies. In light of this, it is perhaps necessary to:

- develop a curriculum for a special one/two year course requiring 16 to 20 credits for the training and education of ESD educators, NGOs, NPOs and CSOs.
- to acknowledge teacher certificate credits for NPO and NGO seminars and working/volunteering experiences.

### **References**

- 1 World Bank "Participation Handbook" , European Development Bank "Tools for Public Consultation" The World Bank Participation Source book 1996
- 2 PRA/PLA facilitators training for 5 days are based on participatory tools of appraisal,
- 3 United Nations Action Plan for Decade of Human Rights Education, calls for experiential participatory learning as a tool.
- 4 PLT, Project Learning Tree, compiled its first textbook for facilitators in 1973 based on experiential learning activities. Earth Education by Steven van Mator employs the experiential learning style, started in 1970's as well.
- 5 Fisher, Simon, David Hicks, 1985, *World Studies*, London, SCDC Publications
- 6 Susan Fountain compiled activities "Learning Together", which help children to take actions and she structured three components of skills which lie in common among these issue-centered education. They are "Self-esteem", "Communication" and "Cooperation".
- 7 One of the textbook for secondary school level students is "Me, you and others" by Elizabeth Callister.
- 8 Kakuta, Naoko, and ERIC, *Training Manual for Facilitators in Environmental Education-to promote, perform, create and participate-*, Tokyo, ERIC, 1999
- 9 NPO is an abbreviation for non-profit organization,