

Issues for Development of Environmental Education for Sustainability and its Teacher Training

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Environmental Education is at the stage where it is regarded as education for sustainability at the international level. While there exist several trends in Japan, the Environment Agency (2000) states that Environmental Education and environmental learning in the 21st century should be regarded as "education and learning for the realization of sustainable society" rather than as "education and learning for the environment".

How does man associates with the environment is the root problems. This problem also deeply relates to the ideal way, consideration, and the sense of values of the lifestyle, and is a problem of the civilization from which the quality of life originates. It is said now that the maintenance of the terrestrial environment is a key to continuing human race and the earth to tomorrow. Therefore, the conversion or the revolution of the lifestyle begins to be called out. It becomes important problem for environmental education to search for the method the sustainable society by cooperating. For the achievement, it is important to understand the existence of the different culture and variety and to promote the attitude of the acceptance that enables coexistence with others as declared in the final report of Thessaloniki. Environmental education should solve the problems on human rights, the different culture or the way of coexistence with nature again now.

As it is clear from the discussion, the concept of environmental education has been historically and socially constructed. Given this fact, it is crucial that we engage in discussions that carve and polish concepts, and realities of environmental education, through critical examination.

The following issues are given for further development of environmental education and its teacher training in Japan.

- 1) Many of the teachers recognize the need for environmental education, however, actual class practices are different by persons. The reason is the difference in cognition, information and knowledge. In other words, teachers divide into two poles.

Therefore, we need to consider correspondence to the two different groups. Firstly we have to cope with the teachers who have already been doing practices of environmental education and want to better environment for practices. And secondly, we have to cope with the teachers who think they should practice environmental education but they do not know how to do it and want to get some help from their first step.

Connection between teaching experience and environmental education practice was found. Ability is needed for teachers to make up own curriculum.

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- 2) Since "environment" is cited as one of the contents in "Period of Integrated Studies," the "Period of Integrated Studies" will play an important role in promoting environmental education. More fruitful learning activities will be done if teachers make teaching plans with connections between "Period of Integrated Studies" and other subjects. Also in-service training is needed for teachers who have low interest and low knowledge about environmental education to improve their awareness.
- 3) Environmental education is practiced in class and then outside of the class. As the result of learning, some children send their message to their community, or some children make actions to improve their surrounding environment. When we look at successful practices in some schools, not only children but also adults in the community change and the schools become "opened school for community." In other words, to build "opened school for community", making curriculum from the view of learning, not from the view of learning, is very important. That is why improving teacher's ability to make curriculum is a key factor.
- 4) It is not usual in the problem based learning that the learning leader like teacher has the obvious and correct answer for problem, because learner often chooses the problem that isn't shown as an example in the text or guide book. However, even if learner decides the theme in problem-based learning, leader has the great role when learners step up next problem. Leader of environmental education has to understand the goal of environmental education, consider the learning situation in class or course, and examine approach to gain the goal. We must understand not only what is learner's request in the next study but also what is necessary for learning goal for environment.
- 5) The results of the policy on environmental education in 1990's were that many education leaders have understood the necessity of environmental education, and environmental education has been recognized as one of the present-day issues of education. The promotion of environmental education training for teachers has a big role in the expansion of environmental education in the schools in 1990's.
- 6) Some training courses held by organizations other than Monbusho and boards of education have problem that there is not much teacher participation. Unless they have the special support of educational board such as the encouragement to participate in training courses other than those held by education board, the teachers have to participate in courses by using vacation days and without financial support.

Otherwise, the members of non-governmental organizations also have the international relationship in term of practice of education, so they have good methods and materials. It is desirable that the ability and influence of universities and NGOs is introduced into the teacher training of environmental education.

- 7) The analysis on teacher training course showed the following issues. One of them is the necessity of the reexamination of concepts on environmental education, since the environmental education has strengthened the relation to sustainable society. Second, it is necessary that the training course offers the program to understand the concept of problem-based learning and the comprehensive idea of environmental education based on the experience learning, workshop, fieldwork and inquiry process. Third is infusion of environmental education into the subjects.

- 8) In Japan, professional development exists in other or organizations. They are: the national and local workshops or conferences held by teachers unions; the national and local workshops by teachers association of each subject; the workshops for education leaders by NGOs; the advice by supervisors in school class; and participation of pilot projects for environmental education. The chance for the professional development for environmental education has expanded. The dissemination of information about various professional developments is necessary.