

Global Environmental Issues and the Education for Sustainable Development, Now and in the Future



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This presentation, entitled as “Global Environmental Issues and the Education for Sustainable Development, Now and in the Future,” aims to identify effective policy recommendations for the improvement of education for sustainable development, in particular environmental education both in industrial and developing countries.

In Section One it makes an overview of the current state of the environmental degradation the world over and in particular in the Asia-Pacific region.

Industrial countries are characterized in terms of environment by:

- 1) the exploitation at home and abroad of non-renewable resources and the wasteful use of renewable resources including marine resources resulting from the unsustainable lifestyles of the people and the intensive competition among private sector enterprises in the increasingly globalized world economy, steadily leading, though on a decelerated basis, to the destruction of the Nature and its ecosystem including deforestation, desertification, the loss of clean extended beaches and biodiversity,
- 2) a rapid pace of urbanization, resulting in an increasing traffic congestion, air, water and soil pollution, noise, vibration and odour as well as an enormous expansion of household garbage and industrial wastes coming out of extensive housing and industrial and commercial facilities, and
- 3) an increasing threat to environmental destruction resulting from the possible use of mass destructive weapons such as chemical, biological and nuclear weapons.

Developing countries, on the other hand, are characterized by:

- 1) a steady loss of fertile farmland, tropical forests, clean water and other natural resources essential to the survival of human and other animal species, resulting from abject poverty especially in rural areas, an excess use of chemical fertilizer and pesticides, over-grazing, deforestation on the land and unsustainable fishing using dynamite in the sea,
- 2) a rapid rise of air, water and soil pollution resulting from a high tempo of unbridled industrialization particularly in metropolitan areas and unregulated urbanization without proper zoning and a steady destruction of clean ocean, lakes and rivers polluted by surging industrial and solid wastes and household garbage,
- 3) the destruction of the Nature and human lives in many developing countries resulting from the lack of early warning anti-disaster systems and from a growing number of internal armed conflicts leading to the

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- surge of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees, and
- 4) the spread of energy-, resources- and waste-intensive, in other words, unsustainable lifestyles coming from industrial countries under an increasing intensive global competition among multinational corporations operating the world over.

Section Two discusses those measures taken by governments of both industrial and developing countries to deal with those environmental issues facing their people and identify major successes and failures encountered by them. It identifies common features of policy responses against environmental degradation in industrial countries, in the decided shift from “Command-and-Control” (C&C) approaches to “Community-Market-Regulatory” (CMR) ones, itself symbolizing the integration of environmental concerns into national development plans and programmes and corporate pricing policies internalizing the social cost of environmental degradation. It also evaluates the contribution made by various partners of development, including central and local governments, the private sector including multinational corporations, local and international NGOs and Official Development Assistance (ODA) by both bilateral and multilateral organizations, specifically in China, India, Indonesia and the Republic of Korea, the countries where the author has been concentrating his analytical studies on major issues of environmental deterioration and the public and private sector responses to it.

In Section Three the presentation focuses on the current state and major issues of environmental education in both industrial and developing countries.

A. Its findings in industrial countries are:

- 1) a great step forward made during the last decade or two in experiential environmental education in allowing the participants often targeting at school children and now increasingly involving adult community residents including housewives and senior citizens to identify the state of environmental degradation in local communities and the need for environmental conservation/protection measures at the community, local and national levels,
- 2) a gradual shift from environmental education/learning focused on Nature Observation, birds and wild animal watching to that on the critical importance of biodiversity, global warming and sustainable lifestyle including the reuse of natural and man-made resources, the reduction and recycling of household and industrial wastes, organic farming emphasizing food safety, health and prevention of HIV/AIDS and communicative diseases and industrial and traffic safety as well,
- 3) an enormous progress made in public organizations including government agencies and private sector enterprises in environmental education/learning among their employees, resulting from the installation and implementation of of corporate environmental guidelines, reports and standards such as ISO14001 certification, the Zero Defect, the Quality Control and the Zero Emission movement spreading from one firm to another, often initiated or supported by respective industry associations at the local, national and international levels including Business Council on Sustainable Development. In preparing these corporate environmental guidelines and reports and monitoring their implementation, a number of environmental NGOs have been invited to participate to make it not only more effective but also more transparent, participatory and accountable to the consumers of their products and services and to the

local community in which those firms operate,

- 4) a legal requirement of environmental assessment approval process for all public and private sector projects exceeding certain amount of investment expenditures and ensuring a greater involvement of community residents and environmental NGOs in preparing long-term city and regional development plans, urban redevelopment plans, programmes and projects such as road building, park construction and the building of school and other public facilities to take into account their environmental concerns and impact,
- 5) SEVEN MAJOR ISSUES being identified as requiring urgent action by governments, central and local, private sector enterprises and NGOs;
 - a) an urgent need for improving evaluation methodologies and systems including measurements for project, programme and policy monitoring and performance in environmental education/learning,
 - b) an urgent need for organizing, implementing and evaluating environmental education/learning FROM THE GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES AND IN THE BROADER CONTEXT OF EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT BEYOND NARROW CONFINES OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND LEARNING. This is one of the most important lessons coming out of the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg in August/September this year, resulting in the adoption of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development as proposed by Prime Minister Koizumi in his endorsement of its original proposal advanced by a Japanese NGO network Japan Forum for Johannesburg,
 - c) an urgent need for developing professional manpower capable of supporting community citizens and groups in planning and programming environmental education/learning activities in the community, in facilitating the mobilization of participants in such community activities, and in networking and coordinating those organizations and individuals concerned with and interested in them,
 - d) strengthening on a systematic basis environmental education/learning activities in different communities and organizational and functional linkages and coordination among them,
 - e) providing accurate environmental information on a timely basis to those in need,
 - f) strengthening systematic linkages among various actors of environmental education/learning such as concerned individuals, NGOs, private sector enterprises and central and local governments, and
 - g) support to private sector organizations in strengthening in-company environmental education/learning activities, green purchases, environmental labeling and in drafting and publishing environmental reports and support to NGOs and private sector organizations in organizing experiential environmental education/learning activities.

B. Its finding in developing countries are:

- 1) top priority being given to education for the reduction and eradication of poverty which constitutes one of the major causes of environmental degradation in developing countries as shown in Section One, which by definition requires environmentally sustainable development integrating environmental conservation and protection into national and local strategies for economic growth,
- 2) considering the critical importance of girls' and women's basic education to income-generating capability and their health education to restraining high birth rates and poverty syndrome, top priority be given to basic education for all, which makes environmental education/learning more effective in developing

countries,

- 3) considering that basic education for all constitutes a fundamental prerequisite to the provision of technical, professional and other tertiary education required for technology- and knowledge-intensive industrialization aimed by many developing countries, and considering that MNCS operating in developing countries also increasingly require high-calibre employees both on the production floor and in offices and R&D laboratories, all the more importance be given to the provision of high-quality basic education which should be only possible with high-quality teachers, teaching curricula, materials (textbooks and reference materials), equipment and facilities as well as excellent school administration and dedicated education personnel,
- 4) with a growing importance being attached to the installation of legal framework administrative and judiciary machinery for environmental protection, an urgent re-orientation is being required in the assistance of bilateral and multilateral donors in favour of environmental ODA and education/learning, along with further efforts by developing country governments and private sector enterprises for integrating environmental concerns into all their national and corporate development plans, programmes and projects,
- 5) a constant adaptation in environmental education/learning being required in developing countries to take into account changing needs and requirements of environmental conservation and protection in response to changing panorama of environmental degradation both in substance and degree,
- 6) top priority in environmental education in developing countries will continue to shift in favour of the conservation and protection of the Nature, biodiversity, rare animals, birds and fish, and tropical forests which all form the critical basis for eco-tourism now becoming quite popular in developing countries which all require needed foreign exchange and job creation for millions of youth coming into the labour market every year, and
- 7) with the rapid pace of urbanization and industrialization, the importance of environmental education/learning for proper collection, treatment and disposal of household and industrial wastes to reduce environmental hazards and risks should be quite clear and obvious.

Section Five presents some policy recommendation with respect to the direction and approaches to environmental education/learning in developing countries and to assistance by bilateral and multilateral donors in line with the above.

On the demand side

- 1) Reorienting national development strategy in favour of sustainable development and greater environmental education/learning interface;
- 2) Enhancing environmental, quality-of-life and human rights awareness among among people of all walks of life, particularly among children and youth in and off school;
- 3) Strengthening environmental governance including administrative and legislative measures and judiciary system and CBOs/CSOs against pollution through public information disclosure, pollution charges, facility licensing, green product certification and appropriate resource pricing;
- 4) Provision of tax and other incentives for those households, schools, firms and other organizations

interested in environmental improvement;

- 5) Need for a gradual shift from “Command-and-Control” principle to “Community-Market-Regulatory” approach, taking into account the variation of regions or areas in terms of damage and abatement cost in setting the level of standards and avoiding their uniformity as well as the equity effects of such standards setting and their enforceability: need for introducing source-specific emission standards rather than across-the board ones;
- 6) Reorienting foreign assistance in favour of improving environment education and governance; and
- 7) Promoting subregional, regional and international cooperation in environment including environmental education/learning, governance, emission trading and CDM as seen with the CJK tripartite arrangement,

On the supply side at home and from overseas

- 1) Upgrading tax and financial incentives and support to households, farmers and private sector firms to install cleaner production technology and increase green investment, purchases and financing;
- 2) Enhancing human and institutional capital and improving environmental management know-how;
- 3) Strengthening administrative support for environmental protection through private-public sector collaboration, inter-sectoral policy integration and community-based resource management;
- 4) Promoting partnership among all stakeholders at the corporate, local and national levels in improving environmental management through participatory planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation processes;
- 5) Re-orienting and increasing foreign assistance at favourable terms in favour of capacity development, i.e., human capital and institutions; and
- 6) The CJK tripartite and regional cooperation for accelerating environment technology, financing and management know-how through private sector cooperation such as joint ventures and technology licensing and private public partnerships.