

TERMS of REFERENCE
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The main theme of the Global Leadership Program 2025 is Education and Cross-border Cooperation for Sustainable Development. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is one of the important measures to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Goal 4, which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. There are various issues in the world today, such as climate change, loss of biodiversity, resource depletion, and the expansion of poverty. ESD is a learning and educational activity that fosters the creators of a sustainable society, who works on the issues as their own issues from a local perspective. It aims to realize a sustainable society by bringing about a transformation in values and behavior (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology for Japan [MEXT], n.d. & 2021). It is expected to help achieve SDG Goal 4. At the same time, the 74th United Nations General Assembly has confirmed that ESD will contribute to the realization of all the 17 SDGs (Inter-ministerial liaison committee on ESD, 2021, UNESCO, 2020).

The concept of sustainable development originally began with the idea of promoting development within the limits of the Earth's ecosystems. Therefore, when ESD was first discussed at the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg in 2002, it was defined as education to enhance the capacity of citizens to deal with environmental and development issues. Subsequently, however, after the 2008 global financial crisis, the emphasis has also shifted to unsustainability in terms of economic disparity and informal employment. In addition, the perspective of disaster risk mitigation has also become important, partly in response to natural disasters that frequently occur around the world. We now acknowledge that we need to address not only the environmental issues, but also other issues such as population, poverty, health, gender, human rights, peace, disaster mitigation, and recognize that all these issues are deeply interrelated to each other (Tanaka & Sugimura, 2014, UNESCO, 2014, Wals & Kieft, 2010). In addition, since these global issues transcend national borders and cannot be solved by one country alone, international cooperation beyond national borders is indispensable for their solution.

So what kind of learning needs to take place in order to put ESD into practice?

Since 2002, the United Nations, with UNESCO playing a leading role, has been developing ESD around the world. In 2020, "ESD for 2030," the international framework for ESD from 2020 to 2030, was released to guide the efforts of the member countries. It advocates for a change not only in the content of education, but also in the methods of education (UNESCO, 2020). This approach is complemented by the OECD's framework on the future of education, which emphasizes the need for transformative competencies to create a more sustainable world (OECD, 2018).

Learners need to understand the complex and wide-ranging global issues and economic globalization, and to see them as their own problems. According to UNESCO (2024), ESD is learning that is:

1. Cognitive: Improving how we think and understand information
2. Socio-emotional: Building social skills, empathy and emotional intelligence
3. Behavioral: Encouraging positive actions and behaviors

To achieve this, we need learner-centered, experience and dialogue-based, and participatory learning, which promotes not only knowledge acquisition but also attitudinal change and enables learners to acquire the skills to make a difference in society. This approach aligns with key competencies in sustainability education that emphasize systems thinking, anticipatory abilities, normative understanding, strategic thinking, and interpersonal skills (Wiek et al., 2011). Addressing sustainability-related issues in the educational content itself is not sufficient if the education is offered in a way that reflects the old-fashioned values of the society (Tanaka & Sugimura, 2014, UNESCO, 2020 & 2024).

Public education places such as elementary schools, middle schools, and universities are important places to practice ESD. At the same time, ESD does not take place only in school education. ESD needs to be developed in the context of lifelong learning including non-formal education at community centers and museums, and corporate and community activities, rooted in the local context. Cross-border collaboration can also make a difference, such as joint research projects or student exchanges focused on sustainability challenges. We can realize more effective ESD by having education institutions cooperate across national borders (Inter-ministerial liaison committee on ESD, 2021, MEXT, 2021, UNESCO, 2014).

In summary, we need to recognize that we live in a relationship with other people in the world, with future generations, and with the environment, and to change our behavior and actions. ESD is an education for this purpose.

SUBTHEMES

The following are the proposed subthemes:

1. Education for Sustainable Development in Basic Education

It is important to offer ESD at elementary and junior high schools. One group will visit Ina Gakuen Junior High School in Saitama Prefecture, adjacent to Tokyo. The school is known as the first public junior high school to establish a "Global Citizenship Education" and is actively implementing ESD-related activities, such as international understanding education and development education. Through learning about ESD educational practices at the school and interacting with students, we will consider questions such as: what is the significance of ESD in basic education in your country? How can you implement effective ESD practices in basic education in your country?

2. Inclusive Education for Children with Cultural Diversity

Multicultural symbiosis is one of the keywords essential to the realization of the SDGs. In reality, however, many children from ethnic, linguistic, and cultural minority groups do not have sufficient access to education in many countries around the world. Japan is no exception. This sub-theme group will visit Hadano City in Kanagawa Prefecture, adjacent to Tokyo. Hadano City is home to many Indochinese refugees from the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, as well as many Latin Americans with Japanese ancestors and their families who emigrated from Latin American countries after 1990. Through learning about the education of children with foreign roots and the support for learning of these children that Sophia University Junior College Division has provided as part of its community-engaged Service-Learning program (Lupas & Miyazaki, 2020, Miyazaki, 2024), we will consider questions such as: what challenges do children with cultural diversity face in your country? How can ESD for multiculturalism be achieved? What are the possibilities and challenges of educational activities in which universities and communities collaborate?

3. Higher Education and Cross-border Cooperation

Higher education institutions play an important role in the development of ESD. One of them is to offer ESD-related educational activities. Another important role is research related to ESD. [The United Nations University Institute of Advanced Studies on Sustainability \(UNU-IAS\)](#), which this group will visit, is an international center of excellence in sustainability research in the areas of governance for climate change, biodiversity, water resource management and others. It also hosts an international university network in the Asia-Pacific called [ProSPER.Net \(Professional network for Sustainable Development and Responsible Education\)](#) which promotes joint research and human resource development among member universities. The group will also interact with students at Sophia University who are working to make a more sustainable campus. Through these activities, we will consider questions such as: what is the significance of ESD in higher education in your country? How can effective ESD practices be realized in your university? What are the possibilities and challenges of international collaboration among universities for ESD?

References and Further Readings

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