

## **SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION AND DIVERSITY**

### **in the context of higher education in Japan**

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This treatise is going to work on the relationship between sustainability education and diversity of students. Studying diversity is not an unexplored topic, especially with respect to racial and ethnic heterogeneity. Both positive and negative impacts have been found on the productivity and learning outcomes when various types of individuals study or work together. Then the questions are how and why diversity of students is important to this new type of education? Authors like Winchester (2002); Dietz (2009); Piland et al. (2000); Thatcher (1999) have invested their thoughts indetermining the relationship, but no works to date have analyzed the new elements in sustainability education.

Limiting the scope of research to Japan, the main question is *How does the diversity of students affect the sustainability education in higher education?*. Qualitative Research and Case study are the basic methodology of the study. Methods include Documents, Archival records, Interviews, Direct observation, Participant-observation, and Physical artifacts (Yin, 1994). Additionally, expert consultation and a number of test surveys are inevitable steps prior to conducting the questionnaire to students. Online SurveyMonkey<sup>®</sup> and Excel Spreadsheet 2007 are where data are processed.

Two case studies on sustainability education were carried on: one short-term and one long-term education. Both IPOS (Intensive Program on Sustainability) and IR3S (presently SSC - Sustainability Science Consortium) education are providing sustainability courses and calling for students from various academic backgrounds and cultures. Key contents of research questions are about the sources of new knowledge on Sustainability; the benefit from the study environment; the difficulties during interactions; and student motivations. Learners have both positive and negative reflection on the study with diversity of fellow students.

According to retrieved data, a diverse student body proves to be more educationally effective than a more homogeneous one. Students were quite uncomfortable with some certain difficulties, but they finally felt at ease with the diversity. Critical thinking and participation skill are improved the most while systems thinking perhaps is cultivated in long-term study. Classroom climate (contributed by teachers, school leaders, and the members of the class) is the important part to produce good learning outcomes. Integrating both Asian and Western education style in a study environment is recommended. International students, specifically in Japan, should be in a diverse class rather than in a homogeneous climate with almost all Japanese students. Not only is diversity significant to sustainability education but also pedagogy, curriculum, or teacher methodology are as important, implicating the need for further research.

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