

## Abstract

“Endogenous ESD: Creative Dynamics at the Crossroad of Tradition and Modernity”

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The conceptualization of “Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)” was necessitated as a result of the need for reorientation of education discussed at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 in order for learners to acquire not only knowledge through environmental education but also the skills, capacities, values and attitudes required to ensure sustainable development that is linked with quality of life. Since 2005, a ten-year programme to promote ESD has been implemented globally. However, since the concept and content of ESD were brought into Japan from outside through such exogenous processes, even if ESD is promoted at the grass-roots level, it still remains an exogenous entity.

In Japan, nevertheless, there exists learning that fosters values and attitudes of respect for the environment (UNESCO 2006). While the stakeholders of the ESD programme recognize such learning as ESD, no efforts are being made to date to explore what qualifies such learning as ESD.

This study, therefore, aims to elucidate, through the lens of exogenous ESD, the inner structure and the mechanisms of learning embedded in the daily life of people who endeavor to achieve quality of life in the community where they live. Based on the concept of endogenous development envisioned by Tsurumi (1989), that is, the development of sustainable self-reliance based on local natural and human resources, tradition and culture, , a hypothesis that endogenous development has a close link with autonomy was made. A rural community called Uwabata Ward in Aya Town in Miyazaki Prefecture, known for its unique “autonomous community center (ACC) system”, was identified for a case study.

By examining the links among and interactions between nature, local autonomy, labor,

life, tradition and culture, six categories of communal learning were identified, namely “family and community life”, “childhood play”, “organic agriculture”, “minor subsistence”, “folkways”, and “the management of the autonomous community center”. The analysis of the six categories of learning highlighted three attributes: spiritual, natural and social, and the broader framework of development behind the case in Uwabata was illuminated. The system originated from the efforts of the former Town Mayor, who succeeded in revitalizing Aya Town, which was once plunged into a serious recession, by passing down his visions and values of endogenous development to town residents through the ACC system, which could be considered as a form of endogenous ESD.

The case study argues the real meaning of human/social development and the possibility of an alternative approach to ESD, namely endogenous ESD, as a way to build a sustainable community through the re-creation of tradition in the process of local autonomy based on the “capital of relationship” that nurtures the sense of solidarity and mutual-help among the residents. Endogenous ESD requires strong contextualization within the “place” and “natural environment” where people live, work, and self-rule to achieve quality of life, and where tradition and modernity cross and creative dynamics emerge. Such cases demonstrate “education for sustainable development” in the true sense of the term.