

A Study on ESD-Oriented Facilitative Teaching Practices and Student Learning in WYM/ASEP

Research Overview

This study explores ESD-oriented facilitative teaching practices within the WYM/ASEP international collaborative program through a sequential exploratory mixed-methods design. Preliminary findings suggest that reflective facilitation, strategic silence, and intercultural tension may support students' autonomy, intercultural understanding, and transformative learning in non-formal international educational contexts.

Purpose

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) emphasizes learners' participatory, reflective, and transformative capacities (UNESCO, 2017). Wals (2007) argues that non-formal educational settings provide authentic social interaction that fosters intercultural collaboration, learner autonomy, and action-oriented learning.

However, within long-term international collaborative programs such as WYM/ASEP, teachers often experience tensions between institutional expectations, performance outcomes, and student-centered learning. Under such pressures, teachers may over-intervene to ensure successful outcomes, potentially reducing opportunities for students to develop autonomy, intercultural problem-solving abilities, and reflective learning.

According to Vare and Scott (2007), such conditions may shift education toward an instrumental orientation focused on measurable outcomes, thereby weakening the reflective dimensions of ESD.

Although previous studies have examined ESD in formal education, limited research has explored how teachers facilitate ESD-oriented learning in non-formal international collaborative contexts. Drawing upon thirteen years of participation in WYM/ASEP as a student, teacher, and coordinator, this study examines how experienced teachers negotiate tensions between performance-oriented expectations and student-centered learning through the ESD framework proposed by the National Institute for Educational Policy Research (NIER, 2012). The study also seeks to synthesize preliminary facilitative guiding principles grounded in teachers' practical experiences.

Methods

This study adopts a sequential exploratory mixed-methods design combining qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys. The current stage focuses on qualitative inquiry.

Research participants include eight university and high school teachers involved in WYM/ASEP. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews based on the six key ESD concepts proposed by the National Institute for Educational Policy Research (NIER, 2012): diversity, interdependence, limited resources, fairness, cooperation, and responsibility.

The analytic process primarily employed inductive qualitative analysis. Interview data were transcribed, accompanied by marginal notes, and analyzed through

open coding to allow concepts and patterns to emerge from the data. Similar codes were later grouped into broader categories and interpreted through the ESD framework as a later-stage interpretive lens rather than a predefined coding structure. The subsequent quantitative phase will develop survey instruments based on the qualitative findings to investigate students' ESD-related learning outcomes.

Results and Discussion

Preliminary findings from the first university teacher case (UP1) reveal a pedagogical shift from direct intervention toward facilitative teaching practices characterized by “strategic silence,” “letting go,” and reflective guidance.

Rather than immediately solving students' problems, the teacher created opportunities for students to confront uncertainty, intercultural tensions, and communication challenges independently. Through such facilitation, the teacher perceived that students gradually developed greater responsibility, self-reflection, and autonomous learning capacities.

Another important finding concerns cultural stereotypes as barriers to intercultural interaction. For example, students sometimes assumed that Japanese students possessed limited English proficiency or perceived group interactions as male-dominated. Instead of directly rejecting these assumptions, the teacher encouraged students to recognize and move beyond such biases through sustained interaction and reflection.

This teaching practice was coded as “deconstructing cultural stereotypes” and interpreted through the ESD concept of diversity. The findings suggest that intercultural

friction itself may function not only as a challenge but also as a meaningful learning resource.

Overall, the study highlights the importance of rethinking teachers' roles within ESD-oriented international education. Rather than functioning solely as knowledge transmitters, teachers may serve as facilitators who cultivate reflective, participatory, and student-centered learning spaces. Preliminary findings also suggest that students at different educational levels may require varying degrees of scaffolding when navigating intercultural collaborative learning environments.

Keywords: Education for Sustainable Development, Facilitative Teaching Intercultural Learning

References

- Wals, A. E. J. (2007). Social learning towards a sustainable world: Principles, perspectives, and praxis. In A. E. J. Wals (Ed.), *Social learning towards a sustainable world*, pp. 13–25. Wageningen Academic Publishers.
- NIER. (2012). ESD in Schools (in Japanese), Final Report, National Institute of Educational Policy Research.
- Vare, P. & Scott, W. (2007). Learning for a change: Exploring the relationship between education and sustainable development. *Journal of Education for Sustainable Development*, 1(2), pp. 191–198. <https://doi.org/10.1177/097340820700100209>
- UNESCO. (2017). *Education for Sustainable Development goals: Learning objectives*. UNESCO. UNESCO Official Website