

OKAYAMA

20th Anniversary

Okayama ESD Promotion Commission

20th Anniversary



2005-2025

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RCE Okayama Marks Its 20th Anniversary: A Year of Promoting the ESD/SDGs and International Recognition

Chair, Okayama ESD Promotion Commission
Hirofumi Abe



The Okayama ESD Promotion Commission was established in the Okayama area of Japan following the United Nations University's 2005 proposal for Regional Centres of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development (RCE). The Commission has seen participation from educational institutions, *kominkans* (CLCs), citizens' groups, businesses, the media, and local governments, marking the start of the *Okayama ESD Project*. This initiative was recognized by the United Nations University in 2005 as one of the world's first seven RCEs. Since then, the Project has promoted ESD throughout the area through workshops, human resource development programs, awards, and domestic and international cooperation. As of May 2025, RCE Okayama had reached 405 participating organizations, making it one of the largest RCEs worldwide in terms of membership.

The *Okayama ESD Project* is attracting international attention; in 2014, the *UNESCO World Conference on ESD* was held in Nagoya City, Aichi Prefecture, and stakeholder meetings in conjunction with the Conference in Okayama City to review the first decade of ESD and look ahead to the future beyond 2015. Subsequently, RCE Okayama was honored to have been selected as one of three global award recipients for the 2016 *UNESCO-Japan Prize on ESD*, implemented by UNESCO. The award citation extolled the initiative, stating that it was an unparalleled effort in which organizations and groups from various fields closely collaborated to promote ESD across the entire area. It has proven to be an approach applicable to other areas and serves as an exemplary model for communities and cities worldwide aiming to build sustainable societies.

Since 2015, ESD has advanced under the *Global Action Programme (GAP) on ESD (2015–2020)*, adopted at the 37th UNESCO General Conference in 2013, with UNESCO as the lead agency. Sustainable Development (SD) remains an urgent global challenge. As is well known, the 2015 UN Summit adopted and promoted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a universal global objective to realize "a society where no one is left behind." This was concretely expressed through 17 comprehensive goals and 169 targets, with an achievement deadline of 2030. Although ESD is included among these SDGs and targets, the 2019 UN General Assembly highlighted that it is key to achieving all SDGs. Subsequently, UNESCO adopted ESD for 2030 (2020–2030) as a successor to the GAP.

The Okayama ESD Promotion Commission and Okayama City are working to enhance and strengthen ESD projects in line with SDGs. To date, we have formulated the *Okayama ESD Project 2020–2030 Fundamental Plan*, which clearly incorporates the SDGs, and established the SDGs & ESD Promotion Division in the Citizens Cooperative Bureau in Okayama City to promote ESD activities and promote and raise awareness of the SDGs. Okayama City hosted the 9th Global RCE Conference, which served as the RCE General Assembly, on the occasion of the 2014 UNESCO World Conference on ESD. It was decided that the 14th Global RCE Conference would be held at RCE Okayama in October 2025. For the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission, this conference marks a milestone, marking the 20th anniversary of its founding and ten full years since the 2014 World Conference. From our standpoint as a Commission, we hope to provide the achievements of REC Okayama directly to the international community and use this as a stage for exchanging opinions.

Congratulatory Address: 20th Anniversary since the Founding of the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission

Mayor, City of Okayama
Masao Omori



I am delighted to congratulate the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission on the milestone of its 20th anniversary.

At the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission, full use has been made of networks built by various participating organizations across generations. Through various initiatives conducted to promote ESD, such as support provided to active organizations; education provided to leaders and youth for sustainable community development; support for initiatives taken at the levels of *kominkans* (CLCs: Community Learning Centers), schools, and local communities; and awards granted to recognize exemplary cases, the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission has helped create a sustainable society where people who learn, think, and act together have gathered to build a community.

Since the late 20th century, concerns related to our global environment and societal issues have increased in momentum worldwide. In 2002, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly declared the ten years spanning from 2005 to 2014 to be the *United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD)*. This led to the founding of the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission in April 2005. Further, the UN University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS) designated Okayama as one of the world's seven Regional Centres of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development (RCEs).

Initiatives taken to promote ESD, whether conducted by organizations, corporations, schools, *kominkans*, or local residents, led by the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission, were awarded the *UNESCO-Japan Prize on Education for Sustainable Development* in 2016. Such efforts have been recognized globally as the *Okayama ESD Model*, which, in turn, has led to stakeholder meetings in conjunction with the *UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development* being held in Okayama in 2014 and the *14th Global RCE Conference* in 2025.

This would not have been possible without the continued efforts of organizations, corporations, and schools that have participated in joint activities under the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission over the past 20 years. I would like to extend my deepest respect and gratitude to the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission for its valuable efforts in supporting the diverse activities conducted.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015 were established, with 2030 as the target year of completion. We believe that our efforts to steadily implement Okayama's Sixth Comprehensive Plan will continue to contribute to achieving the SDGs in Okayama. Thus, the attainment of SDGs does not depend solely on public administration; it is crucial to receive assistance from local residents and communities as well as from organizations and corporations. Moreover, fulfillment of the SDGs would not have been possible without the help of the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission, which has provided support for numerous initiatives taken to advance ESD. We sincerely hope that we will receive continued support for building a sustainable society.

Finally, on this momentous occasion, I would like to congratulate the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission on its 20th anniversary. I would also wish the affiliated individuals continued success and health. I look forward to seeing everyone's future efforts as well as the Commission's ongoing development.

On the Occasion of the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission's 20th Anniversary

Chair, Okayama City Council
Hiroshi Taguchi



I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission on its 20th anniversary.

The Okayama ESD Promotion Commission was founded in 2005. It comprised approximately of 40 organizations that shared its philosophy and took steps to build a community wherein individuals could learn, think, and act together regarding the future of both Okayama and the world. The Commission encompasses about 400 organizations and celebrates its 20th anniversary.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude and respect for your dedicated efforts in various activities such as promoting and raising awareness of ESD, developing human resources for ESD, and working toward attaining the SDGs, while receiving the support and cooperation of many individuals and organizations.

To give some brief history, since Okayama was designated as one of the pioneering Regional Centres of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development (RCEs) by the UN University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS) in 2005, it has steadily made progress, and its achievements has been widely recognized. These include hosting stakeholder meetings in conjunction with the *UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development* in 2014, and receiving the *UNESCO-Japan Prize on Education for Sustainable Development* in 2016 and The UNESCO Learning City Award in 2017.

We live in an era in which we face many challenges: an aging society, declining birthrate, shrinking population, and environmental issues. In this context, it will become increasingly important for all individuals to recognize and consider current issues while taking action to resolve problems and striving to build a livable, sustainable society.

At the Okayama City Council, we actively endeavored to promote sustainable city development with a focus in promoting ESD. One example is the Ordinance to Promote Education for Sustainable Development, which was enacted upon the proposals of the council members.

There are less than five years remaining until 2030, which is the stipulated deadline for fulfilling the SDGs. At the Okayama City Council, we will continue to aim to attain the SDGs while collaborating with the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission more closely than before.

We hope that the *14th Global RCE Conference*, which will be held this year as the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission celebrates its 20th anniversary, will provide an opportunity for Okayama (a city at the forefront of ESD development) to experience even greater growth. I would like to end my message by wishing all the affiliated individuals good health and prosperity.

Celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission's Founding

Superintendent, Okayama City Board of Education
Taiji Miyake



I would like to extend my sincerest congratulations to the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission on its 20th anniversary.

This year marks not only the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission's 20th anniversary, but also commemorates the 20th year since the *United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD)* was adopted in 2005.

The Okayama ESD Promotion Commission has forged networks with diverse stakeholders whose philosophies align with the *Okayama ESD Project*, such as universities, citizens' groups, corporations, and administrators, while effectively promoting ESD and considering the characteristics of Okayama.

At the Okayama City Board of Education, we are working to advance ESD through various educational activities in preschools, schools, and *kominkans* (CLCs), such as stipulating the promotion of ESD in the 2007 Okayama City *Kominkan* Operational Policy and incorporating ESD within the 2013 Okayama City Basic Plan for Education Promotion. We believe that the collaboration with the Commission will continue to become increasingly necessary.

Through the activities conducted in *kominkans*, we focused in *promoting ESD*. We endeavor to resolve local issues and attain the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through a continuous cycle of learning and practice from a community education perspective. Staff at the *kominkans* learn through ESD workshops themselves and have taken on the role of coordinators, where they host initiatives taking place in different communities, such as the provision of learning environments focused on building communities where residents can coexist and initiatives where individuals can apply their acquired knowledge in practice.

For example, at the *kominkans*, we run activities in which attendees learn about the sources of garbage floating in our rivers and where it accumulates. Next, we collect the garbage floating in our rivers and conduct activities to raise awareness about how garbage should not be thrown into our rivers. These activities are conducted alongside local residents and corporations.

Further, at schools, we have incorporated ESD-related activities alongside our local history and culture as well as nature primarily during the Period of Integrated Study. We value children interacting with others, recognizing and taking responsibility for issues occurring close to their home environment, working with their companions to fix these problems, and being exposed to the sentiments of individuals living in local areas.

We live in an era in which drastic changes occur suddenly. It is difficult to predict what society will look like when today's children become adults. Thus, we believe that cultivating practical skills and attitudes, whereby children are able to recognize their strengths and potential and contribute to the society while valuing the connections they share with others, is crucial for building a society that is sustainable and provides its inhabitants with peace of mind.

The Okayama City Board of Education will continue to promote education in this new era, and we hope to receive ongoing support and assistance.

I hope that the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission's 20th anniversary will mark its future growth. I would like to end my message by wishing for the success and good health of all members of the Commission.

Congratulatory Address

President, Okayama University
Yasutomo Nasu



I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission on reaching its 20th anniversary. The promotion of ESD, in which we strive to create a sustainable world, is the key to responding to the issues facing us as modern societies. The ongoing efforts made over the years by the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission, alongside members of the local community, are highly regarded not only in Japan but also globally.

At Okayama University, the importance of ESD was recognized at an early stage, and we have worked to disseminate and implement ESD while trying to achieve collaboration within the local communities and taking an international perspective. In 2007, the *UNESCO chair* at Okayama University was approved, and since then, we have aimed to carry out ESD as a key pillar within education, research, and social contributions taking place at the university. Through firmly and locally rooted ESD-related activities, we worked to provide opportunities for learning to foster *collaborative learning* and *co-creation*.

ESD-related initiatives in Okayama make full use of the city's unique local resources with cooperation among various entities. The Okayama Model, in which entities such as administrations, educational institutions, citizens' groups, and corporations work toward a common goal, has served as a precedent for practical applications that have greatly informed initiatives carried out in other parts of the world. The Okayama ESD Promotion Commission has played an immense role in attaining this goal.

At our university, we hope to provide international students with ample opportunities to experience, learn about, and take action alongside the practical implementation of ESD. We strongly believe that the synthesis of global perspectives with local practices, while ensuring respect for diverse cultures and values in the training of human resources to build a sustainable society, will become increasingly important. ESD is not merely a topic that should be learned for the sake of knowledge alone; it is also a form of education through which we develop the *power to create an even better future*. Moreover, this value should be shared with the broader global society.

Building on the progress made over the past 20 years, new challenges are on the horizon for the next 10 to 20 years. Moving forward, we at Okayama University will continue to work with the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission to advance ESD, both for the future of our area as well as for that of our planet.

Finally, I would like to express my deep respect for the endeavors undertaken by the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission. I hope that the Commission will continue to prosper and that I would like to extend my warmest wishes to all my affiliates.

The Power of Education in Building a Sustainable Future and the Role of RCEs

Director, United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS)

Shinobu Yume Yamaguchi



Congratulations on the 20th anniversary of the Regional Centre of Expertise (RCE) on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Okayama (RCE Okayama) and the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission. The world today faces multiple crises, including climate change, biodiversity loss, resource depletion and growing inequality. According to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Report 2025, only 18% of the targets are currently on track to be achieved by 2030 — underscoring the urgent need for accelerated action to address these challenges. At the same time, it is essential to understand the rapidly changing social landscape, as well as the potential and risks of emerging technologies such as AI, and to develop flexible approaches to respond effectively. Education plays a vital role in the transition to a more sustainable future. It is not only a fundamental human right, but also key to transforming society by reexamining people's values and behaviors.

Since 2005, the United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS) has been building a global network of RCEs to connect local practices with global sustainability challenges. As of September 2025, the network has grown to 200 RCEs in 78 countries, each working on educational initiatives that reflect the unique characteristics of their local communities and culture. RCE Okayama, one of the first RCEs acknowledged in 2005, has continued its pioneering activities for 20 years. Its efforts, in collaboration with the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission, have brought together a diverse range of actors, including elementary and junior high schools, universities, local governments, citizens' groups and businesses, gaining international recognition as an advanced model of locally based ESD. Furthermore, the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission collaborated with ESD organizations in Japan and abroad to develop the ESD Okayama Award, which recognizes outstanding practices from around the world, inspiring ESD practitioners to develop high-quality activities.

In 2014, UNU-IAS, RCE Okayama and Okayama City co-hosted the Ninth Global RCE Conference. It is deeply meaningful that the 14th Global RCE Conference will be again held in Okayama City, coinciding with the 20th anniversary of the Global RCE Network. This conference will be a valuable opportunity to redefine the role of RCEs based on their practices and insights to date, and to envision the future of education for sustainability. On behalf of UNU-IAS, I would like to express our sincere appreciation for the efforts and leadership of all those involved in RCE Okayama and the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission. We look forward to continuing our work together to achieve a sustainable future for humanity and the planet.

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Amplifying Voices for Social Change Through ESD: From Okayama to the World!

Professor Emeritus, Rikkyo University
Former Representative Director, Japan Council on the UN Decade of Education
for Sustainable Development (ESD-J)
Director, ESD Resource Center of Japan
Chairperson, Public Interest Incorporated Association,
Japan Environmental Education Forum (JEEF)
Osamu Abe



As someone who has witnessed the significant contributions that Okayama City and its citizens have made to the development of ESD in Japan and globally over the past 20 years, I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission on its 20th anniversary. Okayama City is Japan’s only city to have enacted an ESD ordinance. This Okayama-style ESD, which is centered on *kominkans* (CLCs) and schools, has developed into a bottom-up ESD initiative rooted in the local community, bringing together citizens, local governments, businesses, and others. Combined with the SDGs, this has led to the creation of sustainable communities, making Okayama a global ESD model. Furthermore, the ESD Okayama Award, established by Okayama City following the UNESCO World Conference on ESD, has become an international prize sought by ESD promotion organizations worldwide.

My connection with the Commission began with my involvement in the UN Decade of the ESD (DESD) Promotion Forum (ESD-J: Japan Council on UN DESD). The ESD-J is an organization established by citizens who, together with the government, proposed the UN DESD at the Johannesburg Summit, aiming to promote it after the Summit. Since 2003, ESD-J has held gatherings across Japan to announce and promote DESD, including one in Okayama City in March 2003, with the cooperation of the Okayama UNESCO Association. Since then, ESD-J has been working with all stakeholders, including UNESCO Headquarters, national and local governments, businesses, and schools, to promote activities to advance ESD, making a significant contribution to the success of DESD. Okayama City is also a member of ESD-J, and its efforts have always encouraged us.

Since 2003, I have visited Okayama City around 20 times, participated in various ESD-related events hosted by Okayama City and Okayama University, and had the opportunity to interact with members of the Commission. I still remember that at the ESD-J National Meeting and the ESD thematic meetings, both held in 2013 in Okayama, for which I served as the representative organizer, we held discussions about the UNESCO World Conference on ESD the following year and the promotion of ESD after 2015, while learning from Okayama, a leading area of ESD. I also founded the ESD Research Center (now the Research Center for ESD), Japan’s first ESD research institute, at Rikkyo University and worked to build an ESD inter-university network, where I received great support from Okayama University and other members of the Commission.

I believe that the Commission’s 20 years of work has made society aware of the need for ESD. Unfortunately, the world is becoming unsustainable, the exact opposite of the sustainable world that ESD aims for, which includes solving environmental problems, building peace, correcting disparities, and guaranteeing human rights. Now is the time to speak out and spread the value of ESD, which nurtures the creators of a sustainable society, both domestically and internationally. I sincerely hope to see further activities from the Commission with a view toward social change.

ESD in Okayama: From Learning that is Locally Rooted to the Rest of the World

**Director, Education Cooperation Department,
Asia-Pacific Cultural Center for UNESCO (ACCU)**
Kiichi Oyasu



I would like to congratulate the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission on its 20th anniversary. I would also like to express my appreciation to the Commission for reaching out to me and providing the opportunity to reflect on our journey. The initiatives taken in Okayama, where ESD has been promoted throughout the local community, have been world-leading efforts recognized not only within the country but also internationally.

I was affiliated with the ESD in Okayama during the *Kominkan Summit in Okayama* in 2007. At that time, I was in charge of Community Learning Centers (CLCs) at UNESCO Bangkok. While we were still in the preparatory stage, I met an old acquaintance of mine, Dr. Hideki Yamamoto, from Okayama University (currently affiliated with Teikyo University). This reunion became an opportunity for us to jointly promote ESD in *kominkans* and CLCs through international exchange programs. For example, during an *environmental inspection* at the Okayama Municipal *Kyoyama kominkan*, I was given the opportunity to be in a place where many local residents actively participated in building a sustainable local community. It was an inspiring experience.

In 2014, I participated in the *Kominkan-CLC International Conference on ESD* as a committee member and gained valuable opportunities to talk and exchange opinions with international visitors. In recent conversations, I shared with affiliates from Asia and Africa, and international conferences held in Okayama sometimes arose as topics of conversation. It truly helps me appreciate how these events help form connections between separate individuals across national borders while laying the foundation for sustainable networks.

After retiring from my job at UNESCO, my work primarily involved teaching international students at Okayama University. I visited various *kominkans* across the city as part of my lessons, and I was able to speak with staff and locals. These opportunities for learning were deeply meaningful not only for my students but also for me. I also got the chance to become involved with the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission, which helped reaffirm my knowledge of the process in which countless conversations and discussions helped shape policies and practices. Even after stepping into my current position at the Asia-Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU), I have found great joy in being involved in activities related to the ESD Okayama Award, as well as overseas exchange programs held at *kominkans*.

The nature of ESD in Okayama, where numerous stakeholders such as administrators, educational institutions, and citizens' groups collaborate with a common goal, has been highly acclaimed both within the nation and globally. It goes without saying that the challenges faced differ by area, but what we see in practice in Okayama is not just the results. I believe that the processes undertaken before these results were achieved (in other words, how we think, act, and collaborate) are rich in suggestions that may inform the activities carried out in other areas. I look forward to seeing Okayama continue to play a crucial role as an international ESD network and facilitate information exchange with other municipalities as well as other global partners while continuing to make use of everything that has been accumulated thus far.

Reflections on the UNESCO World Conference on ESD

**Former Director, Okayama City UNESCO World Conference
on the ESD Promotion Bureau**

Takashi Asai



Congratulations on the 20th anniversary of the founding of the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission.

My involvement with Okayama City began when Okayama City hosted stakeholder meetings in conjunction with the UNESCO World Conference on ESD held in the fall of 2014. In April 2013, the Okayama City UNESCO World Conference on the ESD Promotion Bureau was established, and I was transferred from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) to Okayama City as its director. After a year and a half of preparations, we hosted five international conferences, and, looking back, I am surprised at how successful they were. I believe that this was the result of an all-Okayama effort, including not only the staff of the Bureau, but also other Okayama City officials, local businesses, and residents. I am sure that many of those who were only slightly involved in the meetings still remember them fondly. I believe that ESD in Okayama has become well-known worldwide through them. Thanks in part to the success of these meetings, the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission received the UNESCO-Japan ESD Award in 2016. I believe that Okayama's ESD activities have also been highly praised globally over the past 20 years. It is also remarkable that the ESD Okayama Award is open to countries worldwide.

In spring 2013, we conducted an awareness survey on ESD among Okayama citizens. At the time, only a small percentage of respondents had any knowledge of ESD, such as knowing its content or having heard of it. Over the course of one year, we continued our efforts to raise awareness about ESD. By the spring of 2014, awareness had grown to a point where over 20% of the respondents said they knew about ESD. My own involvement in awareness-raising activities, such as TV and radio appearances and lectures at different forums, remains a vivid memory for me. I was also pleased that nearly 3,000 visitors from other nations traveled to Okayama in the fall of 2014 to participate in these meetings.

Although my time in Okayama lasted only one year and nine months, it was a fulfilling experience. I remain connected to Okayama to this day. I still keep in touch with the people I worked with back then and with those involved in ESD activities. ESD is something that will continue regardless, and I believe that ESD activities in Okayama will continue to develop even further. Once again, I would like to offer my congratulations in celebration of the Commission's 20th anniversary and remain hopeful of a continued active approach to ESD activities.

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Memories and a Congratulatory Message from a High School of UNESCO Associated School

**Teacher, formerly at Okayama Prefectural Yakage High School
(UNESCO Associated School)
Currently at Okayama Prefectural Kurashiki Chuo High School**

Jun Takagi



Congratulations on the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission's 20th anniversary!

We would also like to extend our heartfelt congratulations to the Okayama UNESCO-Associated High School Network.

In 2014, International Forum on UNESCO ASPnet (Students' Forum) was held in Okayama—a truly unforgettable moment for us. I worked at one of the ten UNESCO Associated high schools in Okayama Prefecture (specifically, Okayama Prefectural Yakage High School). I remember trembling nervously while prior information regarding the global conference was made available. I heard that hundreds of students and teaching staff from all over the world would attend the conference. During the conference, which lasted for a few days, all presentations and discussions took place in English. Most importantly, the conference will be run by *high school students from UNESCO Associated Schools*. It would be conducted independently by *high school students*... I was concerned: Would we be able to pull it off? I was not looking forward to the event, and I did not have any expectations [laughter]. It was a global conference that stirred my anxiety and worries. As a member of the *teaching staff*, tasked with guiding our students, my initial thoughts (or perhaps concerns) were that it would be impossible.

However, amidst my worries, I received warm and proactive support from the members of the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission. At the time, the extent of our knowledge could be summed up by the question, "What is ESD anyway?" The members of the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission put us in touch with various specialists who provided valuable advice in an easy-to-understand manner, while connecting the schools to individuals affiliated with related institutions who could give us plenty of hints. They also helped us secure the locations where we would conduct prior meetings and training sessions, helped us order equipment for communication and broadcasting (they even helped us coordinate communication both within and outside Japan), and gave us advice for future educational activities. Our preparations in terms of facilities, information, funding, human resources, tools, and concepts (to name a few) were inadequate, but the members of the Commission always provided us with reliable support. Whenever we became overwhelmed with worry, they would always tell us with a smile, "You're doing fine; let's give it a try!" I still vividly remember how they enthusiastically encouraged us; even now, the memory gets me fired up.

The International Forum ended with a resounding success. Moreover, after gaining confidence following the conference the next year, we worked together to establish the Okayama UNESCO Associated High School Network, an academic network focused on sustainable learning related to ESD for high schools within the prefecture. It was definitely nerve-racking trying to start a new type of organization that had never existed in the entire nation, but we worked hard to embody the spirit of "We're doing fine, let's give it a try!" (^o^). We have kept in touch with everyone at the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission and have continued to receive reliable support for our activities. Every year in the fall, we run *Hands-on Workshop and Networking Event* as well as exchange projects with other high school students from UNESCO Associated Schools around the world. The connections and accomplishments of the Commission's members inspired us deeply. We would like to extend our warmest congratulations once again, and we hope that the Commission will continue to flourish and that we will be able to continue collaborating on diverse sustainable projects.

The Ten Years I Have Spent alongside ESD

English Department, Seishin Junior High School /
Seishin Girls' High School
Saki Kaneda



I would like to express my heartfelt congratulations to the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission on its 20th anniversary: What a commemorative milestone!

Since its inception in 2005, the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission has endeavored to promote ESD within the Okayama area. It aims to build sites of learning and practice with its sights set for the next generation, while working with local communities across different sectors. I would like to extend my deepest respect to these efforts, all of which have formed a great source of power in shaping the future of our area.

My initial encounter with ESD occurred in 2015, when I was in my first year of high school. I participated in numerous ESD-related activities within and outside of school, and in my second year of high school, I took part in the Cambodian Study Tour, held over a week or so in the summer. I experienced what it felt like to live in Cambodia and the issues surrounding poverty firsthand through the conversations I had with the locals, as well as through the visits we paid to schools there. Even now, I remember how this has left a deep impression on me. I realized that “global issues” does not just exist in our textbooks—they exist in reality. I felt compelled to think about what I could do as a fellow resident on the planet we inhabit.

After returning to Japan, I participated in local ESD-related activities and conversed with many individuals from different generations and diverse backgrounds. As I continued to deepen my understanding while meeting all kinds of people, time and again, I sensed the transformative process that I was going through, and I soon realized that the spirit of ESD would become the key to my personal growth. As I was exposed to numerous perspectives through my experiences and conversations with others, I came to understand how *education is what holds the power to transform society*. These feelings motivated me to pursue my career as a teacher.

I have returned to my alma mater, where I convey the spirit of ESD to students as English language teachers in high school. When I stand on the platform, I always remind myself of the importance of encouraging my students to never stop thinking. I believe that students first need to form personal opinions and then will be able to expand their perspectives and ways of thinking through their interactions with others without becoming fixated on their own views. This stance toward learning is what I would like to cultivate.

While the outcomes brought about by the power of education may not be immediately visible, it undoubtedly connects the present with the next generation. As a member of the teaching staff who support ESD in Okayama, I would like to value the stance we take, where we continue to learn and never stop thinking.

I hope that the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission will continue to see significant developments. Lastly, I hope that the steps taken to realize a sustainable society will be passed on to the next generation.

Contributor to Global ESD Advancement: Okayama ESD Promotion Commission Congratulatory Message Recognizing the Commission's 20th Anniversary and Acknowledgment

**RCE Greater Sendai
Professor, Miyagi University of Education Professor
Tomonori Ichinose**



The Okayama ESD Promotion Commission was acknowledged in June 2005 by the United Nations University (UNU) as one of the world's first Regional Centres of Expertise on ESD (RCEs). RCE Greater Sendai was also designated as an RCE in June of the same year, making both part of the "Initial 7," the first group globally to receive this designation. Since the occurrence of the Great East Japan Earthquake on March 11, 2011, our area has focused on hosting the UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in 2015 and promoting itself as a "disaster-prevention, environmental-friendly city." Meanwhile, Okayama City hosted stakeholder meetings in conjunction with the UNESCO World Conference on ESD, including the *Kominkan*-CLC International Conference on ESD, 9th Global RCE Conference, UNESCO ASPnet International ESD Events for Students and Teachers, and the International Conference on Teacher Education (ICTED) during the final year of the UN Decade of ESD (DESD) in 2014. I recall participating in these conferences as a facilitator and organizer.

Moreover, I am delighted that 11 years later, Okayama City has once again been selected as the host city for the 14th Global RCE Conference this October. I would like to express my sincere gratitude and respect to RCE Okayama for its substantial contributions to the promotion of ESD at the regional level worldwide, including the *Okayama ESD Project* receiving the UNESCO-Japan Prize on ESD in 2016 and RCE Okayama's efforts to receive the RCE Award (Outstanding Flagship Project) on six occasions between 2013 and 2024. I am looking forward to your proposal for the new agenda for the "RCE Okayama Declaration 2025 (ROD 2025)," which will serve as a guiding principle for the next decade.

An ESD Network for Mutual Learning and Support

RCE Yokohama
Director, Green Environment Bureau, Yokohama City (Secretariat)
Takaaki Suzuki



Congratulations to the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission on its 20th anniversary. We offer our heartfelt congratulations.

The Okayama ESD Promotion Commission, which has promoted ESD in the Okayama area, is one of the first worldwide Regional Centres of Expertise on ESD (RCEs) to be acknowledged as RCE Okayama, and it has played a leading role in building a sustainable society. We deeply respect the journey that it has made up to this point.

The achievements of the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission's efforts to promote ESD from diverse perspectives through collaboration with educational institutions, citizens' groups, and businesses are models for SD in the local community. In particular, Okayama and Yokohama share the commonality of having their networks supported by local governments at their core, and through working-level meetings and other forums, we have repeatedly exchanged opinions on how ESD activities should be implemented while making the most of the characteristics of each area and the role that local governments should play. It has been a great encouragement to share values and challenges, and learn from each other.

In 2027, GREEN×EXPO 2027 will be held in Yokohama City. We are confident that this will be an excellent opportunity to share content detailing the lessons learned and the initiatives taken to realize a sustainable future, the core principle of ESD, with a global audience. We look forward to the continuation of these efforts toward realizing a sustainable society through ESD practices that leverage regional characteristics, together with everyone in Okayama and all RCE members nationwide.

ESD in Okayama City: The Perspective of Nagoya City, Aichi Prefecture

RCE Chubu
Director and Professor,
International ESD / SDGs Center, Chubu University
Reita Furusawa



I sincerely respect Okayama's efforts, which have been instrumental in the activities of the Regional Centres of Expertise on ESD (RCEs), both domestically and internationally, for the past 20 years since it was acknowledged as one of the first RCEs by the United Nations University (UNU.)

As Secretary-General of RCE Chubu, which was established in 2007, I have had opportunities to interact with the people of Okayama for many years. The first encounter dates to the Expo 2005 in Aichi Prefecture. At the Expo's first-ever ESD event held in the "Global Citizens' Village" within the venue, students and others from Okayama City presented their activities. At that moment, seeing them confront the stern yet earnest comments from NGO leaders, I recall sensing the dawn of ESD.

We in Nagoya City, Aichi Prefecture, are optimistic about the prospect of collaboration between the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission and other neighboring areas on ESD activities within the river basin. The *Okayama ESD Project 2020–2030 Fundamental Plan*, formulated in 2021, centers its activities around Okayama City, but also incorporates a groundbreaking policy of "not being limited to the administrative area, but promoting ESD in collaboration with relevant organizations in a wide area, including the river basin and urban areas in Okayama Prefecture." As discussions about the interconnections between forests, villages, rivers, and oceans gain momentum, both domestically and internationally, I hope to see their concrete collaboration.

Connecting with the Future

Representative Director, NGO Hearts of Gold
Yuko Arimori



I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission on its 20th anniversary.

Back when its residents were not familiar with the term “ESD,” Okayama was accepting suggestions for catchphrases related to the concept. I remember that the staff members would repeat the phrase “ESD is *eh-desu-deh* (great)” in the Okayama dialect. Since then, education and activities meant to create a sustainable society have gained traction, and we now live in an era when the term “SDGs” can be heard in various contexts.

At the NPO Hearts of Gold, through advancing sports and education in Cambodia, we aim to support individuals to be self-reliant and develop human resources focusing on skill transfer and the resolution of issues. All our activities were conducted with the goal of *creating a sustainable society*. We wanted the children in Okayama to learn about our activities; therefore, we joined the *Okayama ESD Project* at an early stage. As we conducted on-site lessons on international understanding and cooperation, children and students often made discoveries in many instances. They were surprised, empathized with others, put in a lot of thought and took action. Thus, we hope to conduct further research. The idea that these children will shape the future of Japan and the world filled me with expectations.

While participating in the *Okayama ESD Project*, I found that many comrades in Okayama shared the same goal, as they carried out different activities. Tiny seeds will soon cause flowers to bloom, and these flowers will soon bear fruit. Just as these plants connect to the next generation, each of these activities is very important. The Okayama ESD Promotion Commission has not only supported these activities and connected people to this end but has also helped Okayama become a leading area with respect to ESD-related activities. I would like to express my deepest respect and gratitude to all the affiliates of the Commission.

As we move forward over the next 10 to 20 years, I hope that we will see more participants join ESD-related activities and see them as something close to their hearts so that we may continue improving the society in which we coexist.

Let's Create a Bright Future together where Our Well-being Shines through!

President, Okayama UNESCO Association
President, Kyoyama District of Okayama ESD Promotion Council
Mitsuyuki Ikeda



I would like to congratulate the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission on its 20th anniversary. As one of the members who has been involved in ESD-related initiatives in Okayama since the start, this is a joyous occasion, and I cannot be prouder!

At a side event of the Johannesburg Summit 2002 (the World Summit on Sustainable Development) held in South Africa, where Japan proposed a plan for the *United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD)* during the UNESCO-hosted *the Seminar on Education for a Sustainable Future*, I had the honor of presenting the proposal drafted in Okayama City as a special representative of Okayama City in the Context of ESD session. The title was *Building a City of Sustainable Development*. At this time, the concept of ESD (as practiced in Okayama) began to spread worldwide. At its early stages, I joined the ESD-J (Japan Council on the *UN DESD*), which was founded in 2003. In my hometown, *Kyoyama* district in Okayama City, ESD-related initiatives began in 2004 through the Okayama *Kyoyama* ESD Environment Project (KEEP). In 2005, when the *DESD* began, the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission was founded in April; in the same year, on June 8, a second ESD Roundtable Conference was held. That same month, on June 29, the United Nations University approved Okayama as a Regional Centre of Expertise on ESD (RCE). We were one of the first seven RCEs to gain this approval and are said to be part of the *initial seven*.

Following this, Okayama has played a leading role in ESD worldwide, such as at the UNESCO-hosted international workshop held in the same city. In 2006, the *Kyoyama* District of Okayama ESD Promotion Council was founded, playing a pioneering role as a local council.

Thus, I feel that the activities carried out in Okayama will come to bear fruit in the form of the *UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development* held in Nagoya City, Aichi Prefecture, Japan, and stakeholder meetings in conjunction with it held in Okayama in 2014, the final year of the *DESD*. I take pride in knowing that after the SDGs took off in 2015 in Okayama, we endeavored to fulfill the SDGs as international goals while continuing to practice ESD by developing human resources. Moreover, this connects us to the activities we carry out in the present day; 2030—which has been set as the target year for achieving the SDGs—is inching closer, but I would say that, globally, we are still far from building a sustainable society. Discussions regarding our international targets post-2030 have already begun, but in Okayama, I see boldness, as though Okayama is not afraid to take the lead globally with innovative post-SDG initiatives or go beyond the SDGs. While creating a sustainable society is a global endeavor, Okayama has led the world in terms of ESD. I hope that we can continue to work at the forefront of ESD-related efforts and forge a bright future through which our sense of collective well-being shines.

Congratulations on the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission's 20th Anniversary

**Representative Director, Specified Nonprofit Corporation,
Okayama NPO Center
Ryo Takahira**



I would like to congratulate the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission, which is celebrating its 20th anniversary. Through achievements such as co-hosting stakeholder meetings in conjunction with the *UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development* and receiving awards such as the *UNESCO-Japan Prize on Education for Sustainable Development*, Okayama gained a global presence as a leader in ESD. In addition, by continuing to provide opportunities for learning and practice at sites such as kominkans and UNESCO Associated Schools, rooted in the *Okayama ESD Project Fundamental Plan*, it brought inspiration to not only residents of Okayama but also to numerous ESD practitioners. I express my gratitude to the members of the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission for their dedication and hard work.

In 2014, when stakeholder meetings were held in conjunction with the UNESCO World Conference, we began conducting activities at the *ESD and Citizens Cooperative Promotion Center*. Through cooperation with Okayama City, we strive to disseminate the *Okayama ESD Project*. At the time of the founding of the Center, there were approximately 250 participating institutions; as of May 2025, that number has risen to 405, and the number of organizations implementing ESD, as well as the number of opportunities available, continues to increase. Furthermore, regarding the *Okayama ESD Project Implementation Support Subsidy*—which is provided with the aim of supplementing activities carried out by organizations participating in the *Okayama ESD Project*—the content of the activities continues to deepen with each passing year through prior discussions I have had with the institutions involved. The initiatives carried out by the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission over the past 20 years have influenced these trends. As someone who is involved with spreading the *Okayama ESD Project*, I have experienced firsthand the results of the learning and practice implemented by the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission as well as by local residents.

It is difficult to predict regional and societal trends moving forward, and while the future hardly seems overwhelmingly positive, I believe that is also why we must have diverse perspectives in striving to build a sustainable society as we learn, practice, and continue to pass on the value of ESD, which will only continue to grow—that is, the era in which we live in. In the flexible yet consistent advancement of ESD, the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission combined a global perspective in terms of incorporating Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the *Global Action Programme (GAP) on ESD* with a local perspective rooted in Okayama. I have great expectations for the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission, in that it will provide us with the knowledge and courage required to create a sustainable society as we move forward, not just in Okayama, but around the globe. We hope to contribute to this field as we continue to hone our skills.

I hope that the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission will continue to flourish, and I would like to end my message by wishing continued success and good health of all the affiliates.

Using Conversations Unique to ESD to Inform Learning and Practice

Chief Advisor
Community Collaboration Center, Specified Nonprofit
Corporation Okayama NPO Center
Haruki Nozaki



Congratulations to the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission for celebrating its 20th anniversary. I would like to extend my deep respect for the Commission’s efforts to take on a global perspective and work toward ESD in its own unique way while also being rooted in Okayama and working with various organizations to create a sustainable society.

I learned about the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission at an ESD Coordinator Training Program. In my second year at work, I felt that I was getting closer to discovering what I wanted to do, but this was not concrete enough for me to articulate.

Following three group training sessions and one individualized discussion, participants learned about cases in practice while writing their own *ESD proposal*. Groupwork was heavily incorporated into the training content. Upon hearing about the word *study*, I had the impression that we would mainly be attending lectures, so I was very surprised at how frequently we were required to work or have group discussions.

As I continued to have conversations with those around me as equals and learned that I was in a space where I could voice my opinions, I found myself capable of expressing my thoughts openly and sincerely. I remember how the words that followed and the reactions I received from those around me helped solidify the structure of my ESD proposal. *I received, and I would give back*. As I repeated this simple cycle, my knowledge deepened—it was as though I had already experienced it intuitively before I understood it in my mind.

Starting in FY 2019, I was given the opportunity to participate in numerous activities held by the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission. The content and areas of focus—③ developing a youth-base and ESD leaders; ④ promoting ESD and SDGs in local communities, kominkans (CLCs), and schools; and ⑥ the continued expansion of ESD activities—varied greatly.

My work has focused on coordination conducted alongside parties involved in ESD-related activities at activity sites, but each time, I find myself learning so much through these interactions. In particular, when there are youth-related activities, I always value being honest with every participating member, as discussed. I take pride in being present at sites where opportunities exist for top-notch learning and invite conversations from individuals from different generations and affiliations.

Given how SDGs have proven difficult to achieve, it is imperative that we use knowledge to advance our practice wherever possible as we try to move forward. The youths of this generation spend the most time living in a society in which sustainability is threatened by climate crises and widening inequality. It will be necessary for us to continue carrying out activities as we learn from each other while overcoming generational and organizational boundaries, so that we can change *this society* to one that is *abundant and resilient*.

I look forward to seeing the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission’s continued growth, and I hope to see further activities implemented with enthusiasm so that we can have hope and expectations as we picture a sustainable future and shape the Okayama area into one that facilitates creation.

Congratulations

Chairman, Okayama Chamber of Commerce and Industry Hisashi Matsuda



Twenty years ago, the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission, as we know it today, began with the dedicated efforts of Mr. Mitsuyuki Ikeda, the current Chair of the Commission’s Steering Committee as well as the Okayama UNESCO Association. At the time, ESD-related developments within Okayama were notable for being centered around the *kominkan* in *Kyoyama* district. At the core of these activities, everyone from elementary school students to older adults from the local district was able to have fun as they grew closer and built networks with each other. After ten years, the children would grow and come of age; they become working adults who understand the importance of ESD and are able to implement it.

When ESD-related activities began in Okayama, I lived in *Ezu-cho* (*Kyoyama* district). My residence faced the *Kannonji* irrigation waterway, and when the water level was low, I witnessed Mr. Ikeda, surrounded by children and older adults, entering the waterway. He would observe the algae and scoop small fish and river shrimp out of the water, all while being surrounded by warm smiles and laughter. I witnessed him many times in a state where he appeared to embody coexistence with nature as well as changes in nature and the environment.

I have known Mr. Ikeda for a long time. There were times when I would leave my residence and he would greet me. I did not have a good understanding of ESD, so the sight was quite puzzling. I asked, “What are all of you doing?” Rather than taking the lead, the leadership displayed by Mr. Ikeda was warm, something that seemed to encourage autonomous actions in the people, which is why the children were able to accept him easily.

During the 2002 summit held in South Africa, Mr. Ikeda presented on research titled *Building a City of Sustainable Development* as a special representative of Okayama City. Over the years, he has been truly dedicated to his activities. Around the same time, I joined the Okayama Association of Corporate Executives and began to understand the concept of ESD. It took me a long time to get caught. However, we begin to see changes when we take important matters seriously. Since then, I have made consistent efforts to assist in the dissemination of ESD. In particular, when it was announced in 2014 that the *UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development*—a comprehensive conference regarding the *United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD)*—would be held in Nagoya City, Aichi Prefecture, and stakeholder meetings in conjunction with it would be held in Okayama City, I felt deeply moved in knowing that the activities we carried out in Okayama were understood on a global scale. That same year, I became a representative Director of the Okayama Association of Corporate Executives and established a structure wherein we extended our full support to meetings. In 2019, I became the Chairman of the Okayama Chamber of Commerce and Industry. I continued my activities with a solid understanding that the initiatives taken to attain the SDGs are indispensable for small- and medium-sized local enterprises.

One of the goals set for 2030 is for more residents to understand the concept of ESD and to take action. There is no end to these activities, and their continuation is what will become the source of our strength. Moving forward, I promise to continue striving to raise awareness of ESD.

In Anticipation of a Boundary-transcending Collaborative Learning Network

President and CEO, Okayama Toyota Motor Corporation
Shunsuke Kajitani



I extend my heartfelt consent to the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission on its 20th anniversary. Based on the Regional Centre of Expertise on ESD (RCE) on a concept proposed by the United Nations University (UNU), the Commission was established in April 2005 by about 20 organizations, including citizens' groups, NPOs, schools, universities, businesses, and local governments, to promote ESD tailored to the characteristics of the Okayama area. Since then, it has regularly revised the *Okayama ESD Project Fundamental Plan* and developed its activities. I express my sincere respect for the Commission's progress to the point where 405 organizations now participate.

I believe that my earliest involvement with the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission was around 2012, when the Okayama Chamber of Commerce and Industry also joined in preparations for the UNESCO World Conference on ESD, which was held in Nagoya City. Stakeholder meetings were held in conjunction with the Conference in Okayama City in 2014. Later, in 2015, the ESD Okayama Award was launched in two categories: Global Prize and Okayama Regional Prize. I served as a judge for the latter. I discovered that many people in the Okayama Prefecture were involved in a variety of ESD activities and personally learned a great deal from them. I also had opportunities to participate in the activities of those who applied at the time, and we sometimes receive their support for our company's projects. While the Okayama Regional Prize of the ESD Okayama Award was discontinued in FY2019, it continues to be presented to organizations worldwide. I believe that it shows the world that Okayama is a pioneering area in ESD.

Furthermore, Okayama City's long-standing ESD efforts formed the backbone of promoting activities to advance the SDGs activities throughout Okayama Prefecture. The Okayama SDGs Award, which recognizes outstanding SDG initiatives, is held annually from 2020 to 2024, and the Okayama SDGs Fair, which brings together SDG initiatives from industry, local governments, and academia, begins in FY 2023. Many students also participated in fairs. ESD is essential for achieving the SDGs, and I believe that the fact that Okayama City has a foundation for ESD activities has led to collaboration among industry, local governments, academia, finance, media, and the public to promote the SDGs.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the formation of the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission, and the 14th Global RCE Conference will be held in Okayama City. I hope that this will serve as an opportunity to further invigorate the exchange of ESD practices, so that many people from diverse backgrounds will learn from each other and that more people will take action to create a future in which we can continue to live peacefully. I sincerely hope that the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission will continue to grow, deepening mutual understanding based on the promotion of ESD and serving as a core for building a society that emphasizes well-being worldwide.

On the 20th Anniversary of the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission

**Chairman and CEO, The Sanyo Shimbun
Masami Matsuda**



I would like to offer my heartfelt congratulations on the 20th anniversary of the formation of the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission. Building a sustainable society requires fostering human resources that can independently consider local issues and take action to resolve them. I express my deep respect for the efforts of the Commission, which has put ESD philosophy into practice and powerfully led the movement for many years.

In 2018, when I was the representative director of the Okayama Association of Corporate Executives, I focused on the SDGs adopted by the United Nations as a key theme and held a series of lectures featuring invited experts and case studies of member companies. Based on the knowledge gained from these efforts, we compiled a proposal in 2020 titled “Becoming a Model SDG Prefecture: Efforts toward Realization as a Whole Community.”.

The city has been making active efforts to align activities with the 17 SDGs, including promoting collaboration with members of finance, media, and the public, in addition to industry, local governments, and academia, and established the Okayama SDGs Award to publicly solicit and honor leading examples from companies and citizens’ groups. The driving force behind these efforts is the expanded implementation of ESD in Okayama.

The importance of sustainability and proactive involvement in local issues is already shared among schools and *kominkans* (CLCs), and many residents naturally accept these values. In particular, the fact that stakeholder meetings in conjunction with the UNESCO World Conference on ESD were held in Okayama City in 2014 proves that each of these achievements has been recognized internationally. I am convinced that it was precisely because of this foundation that the SDGs have taken root in the community without any sense of incongruity, and that diverse collaboration has progressed.

ESD and SDGs are mutually complementary, both aiming to “cultivate future leaders” and “ensure sustainability in the area.” These two pillars, similar to the two wheels of a cart, were earnestly pursued by Okayama, ahead of the rest of Japan. This unwavering commitment undoubtedly serves as a reliable compass guiding us toward a society for which we all should strive.

At The Sanyo Shimbun, we also launched the *Kibi-no-Wa* Project in 2021 to shed light on the area’s attractions and challenges, disseminate information, and foster collaboration among local communities based on the principles of the SDGs. We will continue to fulfill our responsibilities as media outlets and actively participate in creating sustainable communities.

We sincerely hope that the progress and achievements of your commission over the past 20 years will continue to expand and deepen, becoming a driving force in realizing a sustainable and prosperous society.

Okayama – a Pioneer and Role Model for ESD around the World

ESD Consultant, Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, Germany
Retired Staff Member, Ministry for Environment in Hamburg
Founder, Initiative “Hamburg Learns Sustainability”
Co-coordinator, ESD Working Group, UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC)

Jürgen Forkel-Schubert



I was delighted to have the opportunity to write a congratulatory message on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission.

When I first came to Japan to give a lecture in 2006, I knew nothing about the country or Okayama. This changed when I was asked to lead a UNESCO working group for local governments as part of the *UNESCO Global Action Programme on ESD* (GAP 2015-2019) and got to know the secretariat’s staff from the ESD Promotion Division in Okayama City. When I was in Japan on a private visit with my wife in 2015, they welcomed us warmly in Okayama and showed us the famous black “Crow Castle” and the beautiful *Kōraku-en* garden. Since experiencing this kindness and hospitality firsthand, I have felt a strong emotional connection to Okayama and Japan and have been working hard to improve cooperation between the two cities.

Okayama and Hamburg have many things in common. Hamburg has also had an ESD network since 2005, which I started as head of the Environmental Education Department at the Hamburg Environmental Authority. This initiative, known as “Hamburg Learns Sustainability,” is still in place today and, in 2021, published a government-approved “Hamburg Master Plan ESD 2030”—the first of its kind for a major city in Germany. In addition, Okayama and Hamburg have been awarded the UNESCO-Japan Prize on ESD for their networks - Okayama in 2016 and Hamburg in 2019.

Last but not least, both cities are also members of UNESCO's Global Network of Learning Cities and work together successfully in the ESD working group. With their extensive experience and many good examples of municipal solutions, they make a special contribution to overcoming the challenges of sustainability and climate change. And it is understandable and an honor that the draft presented by UNESCO as part of the “Greening Education Partnership” (GEP) for the global “Greening Communities Guidance: Lifelong Learning for Climate and Sustainability Action” lists both cities as outstanding “practical examples of learning strategies.”

But what really sets Okayama apart from Hamburg, and what I envy the city for, is the ESD Okayama Award! This prize, which has been awarded since 2015, comes with a much smaller cash prize than the UNESCO-Japan Prize on ESD. But it also includes a personal invitation to Okayama to attend a high-level conference with a ceremony and a very valuable excursion program that showcases local ESD projects. When Hamburg received the ESD Okayama Award for its ESD master plan in 2022, I was able to accompany Ralf Behrens, the head of the master plan, at the expense of the city of Hamburg. I will always remember this event, especially because of the tremendous warmth of the staff of the organizing the Commission.

Thanks to global networking within the framework of UNESCO's work, but above all thanks to the friendly and intensive care provided to the award winners on site, the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission has been able to continuously increase the attractiveness of the ESD Okayama Award and the number of applications worldwide, making it a globally recognized brand for ESD. When asked about Japanese ESD activities, the first thing that comes to mind is the work of the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission. I would like to congratulate you on this success!

However, as an experienced practitioner in administration, I am also aware of the downside of success. Without today's highly qualified staff and additional resources, it will be difficult to build on this success. Nevertheless, I am confident that the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission will continue to have a lucky hand in their strategic direction in the future, and I wish Okayama continued success and all the best.

Okayama ESD Project 2020-2030 Fundamental Plan

Preface

1 The Need for Creating a Sustainable Society and ESD

The progression of climate change, loss of biodiversity, and widening economic disparities are damaging the social environment that ensures a prosperous life for future generations. Additionally, new challenges with significant social impacts have emerged, such as the spread of COVID-19 in 2020.

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is an initiative aiming to realize a sustainable society by enabling individuals to proactively identify various issues facing modern society as their own problems and tackle them in familiar contexts. ESD is expected to foster a new sense of values and behavioral changes that will solve these problems.

In 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) proposed the concept of "sustainable development," defined as development that meets the needs of the present generation while also fulfilling those of future generations, which received broad support worldwide. At the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio Summit), it was agreed that education would play an important role in promoting sustainable development. Based on this, the Japanese government, together with NGOs, proposed the promotion of ESD at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg Summit). Subsequently, the United Nations General Assembly commenced the *UN Decade of ESD (DESD)*.

Today, global challenges are increasingly complex and interconnected, making them impossible to solve with simple initiatives. It is necessary to deepen our understanding of environmental and developmental issues, change our behavior in daily life and economic activities, and work collectively to influence society. As a result, the importance of ESD is on the rise.

In addition to global concerns, the Okayama area faces specific issues in building an inclusive society, such as declining birthrates and an aging population, weakened local ties, responses to sexual discrimination, and support for socially vulnerable groups. These realities highlight the need to promote ESD at all levels, while engaging and collaborating with various individuals, groups, and organizations.

2 Formulation of the New Fundamental Plan

The Okayama ESD Promotion Commission was established in April 2005 to support the Regional Centre of Expertise on ESD (RCE) initiative advocated by the United Nations University, and the *Okayama ESD Project Fundamental Plan* was formulated. In June, the Okayama area was recognized by the United Nations University as one of the world's first seven RCEs. Since then, a system has been established to promote ESD activities throughout the community, including efforts in *kominkans* (CLC: Community Learning Centers), UNESCO Associated Schools, and through collaboration among universities, citizens' organizations, companies, and local governments.

In particular, stakeholder meetings held in conjunction with the UNESCO World Conference on ESD held in Okayama City in 2014 spurred active promotion and awareness-raising activities throughout the city and beyond. Additionally, ESD practices rooted in the local community, developed with the participation of diverse actors, were presented as the "ESD Okayama Model," which was evaluated by relevant organizations and participants.

Subsequently, UNESCO formulated the *Global Action Programme (GAP) on ESD* as the successor framework to the *UN DESD*, designed to accelerate the transition to a sustainable society and strengthen ESD practices. Within this framework, the *Okayama ESD Project* formulated a new fundamental plan covering 2015-2019.

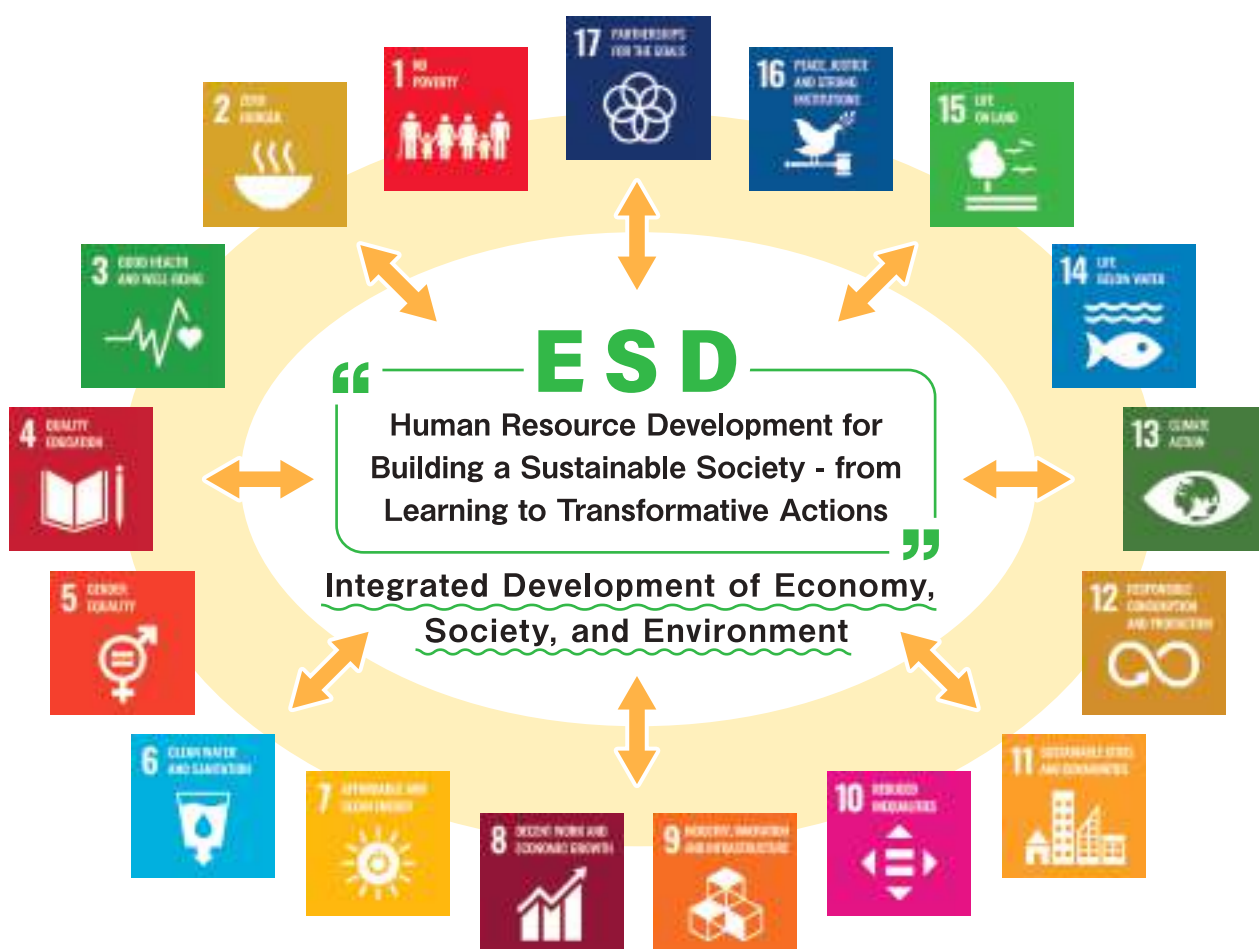
Meanwhile, in 2015, the United Nations adopted "Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," which identified the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as universal objectives for both developed and developing countries. These goals envision a sustainable society in which economic, social, and environmental dimensions are harmonized and no one is left behind.

ESD was listed in Target 4.7 of the SDGs, and at the 2019 United Nations General Assembly, it was positioned as a key of achieving and supporting all SDGs. In response, UNESCO developed Education for Sustainable Development: Towards Achieving the SDGs (ESD for 2030) UNESCO in 2019 to succeed the *GAP* and to guide the 2020-2030 period.

ESD for 2030 emphasizes linking ESD to the SDGs and aims to build a more just and sustainable society by strengthening ESD and contributing to the achievement of the SDGs.

The Okayama area, where ESD has progressed significantly, aims to contribute to achieving the SDGs by further promoting and implementing ESD initiatives. These would include not only fostering learning and behavioral change for a sustainable society but also advancing human resource development by utilizing the results of the past ESD activities.

Therefore, the *Okayama ESD Project Fundamental Plan* was amended to formulate the *Okayama ESD Project 2020-2030 Fundamental Plan*. This plan promotes the creation of a sustainable society by 2030, accounting for international factors such as UNESCO, Japan's national ESD plan, and the trends in Okayama City's policies.



Text

1 Aims of the *Okayama ESD Project* (Objectives)

This project aims to create an Okayama area where people learn, think, and act together for the future of both their community and the entire world. Through ESD initiatives, it seeks to advance efforts for global sustainable social development and contribute to building a sustainable society that harmoniously achieves the SDGs across economic, social, and the environmental fields.

2 Our Future Area Vision (Image of the Future to Achieve)

- (1) Ensure that large numbers of citizens understand and work toward the ESD goal of creating a sustainable society.
- (2) Expand the circle of voluntary organizations active in the Okayama area to promote a sustainable society and community.
- (3) Ensure continuous learning among stakeholders (all parties affected by the organizations' activities) by building networks among organizations and associations in Japan and overseas, as well as within Okayama Prefecture.

3 Basic Matters

(1) Entities Implementing the Project

The project will be implemented in collaboration with the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission, composed of organizations, institutions, and groups aligned with its objectives. Each shall take the initiative according to its role and collaborate in implementation.

(2) Project Areas

The project will be implemented in Okayama City but not limited to administrative boundaries. It will also promote ESD in collaboration with organizations across the river basin and other urban areas in Okayama Prefecture.

(3) Project Fields

The project covers economic, social, and environmental activities related to creating a sustainable society.

(4) Project Duration.

This project covers a 10-year period from 2020 to 2030, concurrent with ESD for 2030. However, the project is reviewed as needed to adapt flexibly to changing circumstances.

4 Achievements and Challenges So Far

(1) Results

The fundamental plan of the *Okayama ESD Project* was formulated in 2005, followed by the *2015-2019 Fundamental Plan*. Continued promotion of ESD initiatives has transformed citizens' awareness and behavior toward sustainability.

① ESD Promotion Across the City: Schools and Local Communities

- In ESD facilities such as *kominkans* and UNESCO Associated Schools, initiatives have steadily changed the awareness and behavior of students, *kominkan* users, teachers, and staff.
- *Kominkans* have become "places to practice ESD" for residents, with staff acting as community coordinators.
- Initiatives and partnerships as UNESCO Associated Schools have progressed in elementary and junior high schools, while ESD and SDGs initiatives in high schools have accelerated.
- Numerous workshops have been held across communities and the city to address local futures and social issues, while human resources to coordinate ESD have been developed.
- ESD activities now contribute to sustainable urban development, including support for the elderly and foreign residents and protecting wildlife.

② DINs and Diverse Groups

- The number of groups in the *Okayama ESD Project* has increased steadily, spreading activities throughout the area and fostering collaboration across stakeholders.
- ESD and SDG initiatives for the youth attracted many participants, expanding the base of future leaders for sustainability.
- Stakeholder activities have spread to a variety of fields, compared to project's commencement.
- The Okayama Regional and Global Prize of the ESD Okayama Award, launched in 2015, received 385 applications in five years, involving diverse stakeholders in Japan and abroad.

③ Creating a Society through Wide-Area Exchanges and ESD Activities

- The Okayama area has become a leader in ESD in Japan and abroad, with many local organizations receiving ESD-related awards.
- The Commission has contributed to the promotion of ESD by participating in international conferences, such as RCE meetings and conferences, spreading information on Okayama initiatives, and co-hosting ESD-related conferences with universities.
- Exchanging case studies with stakeholders in Japan and abroad has provided new insights and enriched their content.

(2) Challenges

Since the launch of the *Okayama ESD Project*, the number of participating organizations and concrete ESD activities has steadily increased, and the scope of activities has expanded. However, awareness and specific activities to realize a sustainable society have not spread citywide.

In the future, we need to continue and develop further efforts towards the steady implementation of ESD by 2030, while using the results and evaluations of previous efforts in the Okayama area over 15 years from *UN DESD* to *GAP*.

- ① There is a need to deepen coordination in community-based ESD activities and work toward a sustainable society through local development and revitalization, while considering that local issues are closely related to the global SDGs. It is vital to enhance dissemination of information, including the relationship between ESD and SDGs.
- ② As SDGs aim for balance across economy, society, and environment, it is important to strengthen human resource development to address increasingly diverse social issues, including environmental issues, multicultural coexistence, and the inheritance of traditional culture.
- ③ The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly altered values, civic awareness, and behavior. ESD and SDGs have become crucial in understanding current issues and taking action to resolve them.
- ④ Cooperation with intermediate support organizations must be expanded to strengthen local ESD networks, enhance coordination, and increase synergies across fields.
- ⑤ Private sector efforts to achieve SDGs are accelerating in response to the amendment of the Charter of Corporate Behavior of Keidanren (Japan Business Federation). Cooperation between the private sector and established networks will be further promoted.
- ⑥ Under the global ESD promotion framework for 2030, active contributions to international ESD promotion, exchanges with overseas stakeholders, and disseminating information both within and outside Japan, will become even more crucial.

5 Priority Areas of this Project

(1) Eight Key Initiatives ■ ■ ■

Based on the results and challenges up to 2019, the focus for the next decade will be on the following:

- ① **Promoting Sustainable Community Development**
Promote citizens' understanding of a sustainable society, depict a sustainable future for Okayama and its communities, and promote collaboration to achieve it.
- ② **Taking Action for SDGs**
Contribute to achieving SDGs by promoting initiatives that create a sustainable society, emphasizing the role of ESD in achieving this process.
- ③ **Developing a Youth-base and ESD Leaders**
Develop a system for youth participation in sustainability and develop leaders for ESD activities in communities and organizations.
- ④ **Promoting ESD in Local Communities, Kominkans (CLCs), and Schools**
Support proactive initiatives in schools, *kominkans*, and local organizations, drawing on Okayama's strengths.
- ⑤ **Rewarding Good ESD Practices**
Highlight excellent examples as models for ESD activities, disseminate them widely, and improve their quality.

⑥ Continued Expansion of ESD Activities

Expand the circle of activities to create a sustainable society and increasing the number of local ESD activity facilities outside *kominkans* and schools.

⑦ Promotion of Initiatives by Businesses and Economic Organizations

Promote ESD and SDG initiatives in businesses and economic organizations.

⑧ Domestic and International Collaboration

Collaborate further with ESD-related organizations in Japan and abroad.

(2) Specific Initiatives

The main projects to promote key initiatives are as follows.

① Promoting Sustainable Community Development

- Collaborate with citizens' organizations, *kominkans*, local governments, universities, etc. to promote learning opportunities, resolve issues, and create a vision for sustainable society.
- Hold citizen participation events to share initiatives for creating a sustainable society, and connect to future actions.
- Create opportunities for various organizations participating in the *Okayama ESD Project* to exchange information and promote collaboration.

② Taking Action for SDGs

- Utilize ESD activities and collaborating with concerned local governments and stakeholders to address social issues, including environmental problems.
- Emphasize the role of ESD in achieving all SDGs and create opportunities for citizens to learn and practice sustainability.
- Hold events to promote understanding of SDGs, raising awareness of the relationship between daily life and SDGs and changes in behavior.

③ Developing a Youth-base and ESD Leaders

- Create opportunities to convey ideas, wisdom, and technologies for creating a sustainable society across generations and fields, while developing human resources, including young people committed to creating a sustainable society.
- Train and secure coordinators to design ESD learning programs at various learning centers and citizens' groups.
- Promote efforts to increase ESD practitioners, such as university students, in collaboration with universities, NPOs, and *kominkans*.

④ Promoting ESD in Local Communities, Kominkans (CLCs), and Schools

- Further promote ESD in *kominkans* and collaboration among communities, schools, and *kominkans*.
- Encourage ESD activities that connect universities and local communities and promote ESD utilizing social education and lifelong learning facilities.
- Support ESD activities of a network of UNESCO Associated Schools in Okayama, expanding opportunities for cooperation, presentation of initiatives, and exchanges within Japan and abroad.
- Conduct ESD training for teachers in all schools, including ESD in the educational curriculum and organizing a better curriculum from its perspective.

⑤ Rewarding Good ESD Practices

- Present the ESD Okayama Award to recognize ESD activities.
- Create opportunities to share best practices in Japan and abroad and secure stakeholders to gain inputs for future ESD activities, leading to revitalization and improvement of their quality.

⑥ Continued Expansion of ESD Activities

- Subsidize part of the costs to support the continuation of new ESD initiatives.
- Widely disseminate and share information about the ESD activities of each stakeholder through videos, websites, and so on.
- Strengthen cooperation with intermediate support organizations and expand activity bases across the area using network hubs.

⑦ Promoting Initiatives by Businesses and Economic Organizations

- Provide SDG training for companies, including social responsibility (SR) and social contribution activities.
- Collaborate with economic organizations to disseminate information on companies working on ESD and SDGs and expand efforts to create a sustainable society.

⑧ Domestic and International Collaboration

- Address common social issues across the areas in collaboration with surrounding local governments in the prefecture's river basin.
- Promote exchanges with *kominkans* and CLCs in Japan and overseas.
- Promote sharing and exchange of ESD activities in cooperation with RCE regions in Japan and overseas.
- Contribute to global ESD promotion by sharing information on *Okayama ESD Project* towards 2030 in collaboration with international organizations such as UNESCO.

6 Indicators and Goals for Achievement in 10 Years

Metrics for key initiatives of work to achieve each goal are as follows.

① Promoting Sustainable Community Development

Metrics	Current Status (2019)	Interim Status (2025)	Final Status (2030)
Number of organizations participating in <i>Okayama ESD Project</i>	307	405	430
Number of workshops held at community hubs for <i>Okayama ESD Project</i>	20	Cumulative Total 150	Cumulative Total 300

② Taking Action for SDGs

Metrics	Current Status (2019)	Interim Status (2025)	Final Status (2030)
Number of applications for the Okayama SDGs Award	— (75 in 2020)	Cumulative Total 420	Cumulative Total 800
Number of participants at the SDGs Festival per day	2,250	3,000	3,500

③ Developing a Youth-base and ESD leaders

Metrics	Current Status (2019)	Interim Status (2025)	Final Status (2030)
Number of trainees undergoing training to develop their skills as ESD practitioners	19	Cumulative Total 120	Cumulative Total 220
Number of participants in ESD activities for universities, high schools, and youth	Cumulative Total 3,446	Cumulative Total 11,500	Cumulative Total 19,000
Percentage of youth (in their 20s) participating in community activities	20.1%	25.1%	—

④ Promoting ESD in Local Communities, *Kominkans* (CLCs), and schools

Metrics	Current Status (2019)	Interim Status (2025)	Final Status (2030)
Percentage of citizens participating in the Environmental Partnership Project	7.9%	10%	12.5%
Number of participants in projects in Okayama Municipal <i>Kominkans</i> (CLCs) Basic Policy priority areas	53,000	62,000	—
Number of Okayama Municipal junior high school districts with experience in learning and practical activities in cooperation with <i>kominkans</i>	36 Junior High School Districts	36 Junior High School Districts	36 Junior High School Districts

⑤ Rewarding Good ESD Practices

Metrics	Current Status (2019)	Interim Status (2025)	Final Status (2030)
Number of applications for the ESD Okayama Award	Cumulative Total 385	Cumulative Total 800	Cumulative Total 1,200
Number of countries of applicants for the ESD Okayama Award	Cumulative Total 172	Cumulative Total 400	Cumulative Total 600

⑥ Expansion of ESD activities

Metrics	Current Status (2019)	Interim Status (2025)	Final Status (2030)
Number of facilities registered with the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission that regularly provide ESD-related courses and information	135	140	145
Rate of awareness of ESD and SDGs among Okayama citizens	20.9%	30%	30%

⑦ Promotion of Initiatives by Businesses and Economic Organizations

Metrics	Current Status (2019)	Interim Status (2025)	Final Status (2030)
Number of Companies registered with the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission	36	50	70
Number of ESD/SDGs training programs held for companies	2	Cumulative Total 15	Cumulative Total 25

⑧ Domestic and International Cooperation

Metrics	Current Status (2019)	Interim Status (2025)	Final Status (2030)
Number of exchanges between the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission and institutions and organizations within and outside Japan working on ESD	28	Cumulative Total 180	Cumulative Total 350

7 For the Promotion of this Project

(1) Future Direction of ESD to Achieve SDGs

ESD initiatives will be further promoted by clarifying their importance in achieving a sustainable society envisioned by the SDGs. We also emphasize the role of ESD in realizing all SDGs, raising awareness and share information through the activities of each stakeholder.

(2) Promotion Structure Centered on the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission

This project will be promoted mainly by the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission, the parent body of the RCE, which is recognized by the United Nations University, in cooperation with all organizations, institutions, and groups that support the promotion of ESD, playing their appropriate roles.

- ① The Commission comprises various organizations, groups, and institutions in Okayama, including local governments, schools, research and social education institutions, local communities, private nonprofit organizations, companies, and media organizations.
- ② The Commission shall play the following roles in promoting ESD throughout the Okayama area.
 - (a) Formulate the fundamental plan for the *Okayama ESD Project*.
 - (b) Designate and support activities to meet the objectives of the project as well as organizations and groups that conduct these activities and promote the project through collaboration and cooperation.
 - (c) Promote cooperation, exchange, and coordinate communication among organizations working on ESD.
 - (d) Enhance knowledge and understanding of ESD and SDGs across the area.
 - (e) Promote information and other exchanges with different areas and related organizations working on ESD.
- ③ The Commission shall have a Committee, a Steering Committee, and a Secretariat as its governing bodies.

(3) Cross-sectoral Collaboration

To promote this project, the Commission will work with the relevant departments of the City of Okayama and the Okayama City Board of Education, as well as with universities and research institutions that provide specialized human resource development and information. It will also work with organizations working towards resolving social issues, companies, economic organizations, and other entities.

Furthermore, the Commission will promote ESD through networks across the area, working with intermediate support organizations that function as hubs for various groups, collaborating with diverse local organizations to set up representative projects that will help create a sustainable society.

(4) Provision of Information

In implementing the project, the Commission will identify information on ESD, various needs (requirements), and seeds (what can be provided) and promote information exchange between organizations and individuals involved in this project. It will also share information clearly with target audience using mass media, social media, pamphlets, and ESD facilities.

(5) Progress Management of *Okayama ESD Project*

The Okayama ESD Promotion Commission's Steering Committee conducts annual progress management, an intermediate evaluation in 2025, and a final evaluation in 2030. A final evaluation will be conducted to facilitate the further effective promotion of ESD beyond 2030. During the implementation period of the *Okayama ESD Project 2020-2030*, it will also closely monitor changes in economic, social, and environmental conditions, along with international trends; review this Fundamental Plan, if necessary; and check and review the measures based on it.

Ordinance on the Promotion of Education for Sustainable Development

September 30th, 2014
City Ordinance No. 128

Our city retains extensive areas of *Satochi-satoyama*, socioecological production landscapes built and maintained by our predecessors over a long period of time, and preserves diverse wildlife habitats, including rare species no longer found in other cities.

Sustainable lifestyles and activities have flourished in the city, and the rich history and cultural heritage of the ancient *Kibi* culture have been carefully preserved.

Considering this background, the City was selected by the Japanese government and UNESCO to host various stakeholder meetings in conjunction with the UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in 2014. Furthermore, the significance of local initiatives has increased, as demonstrated by the inclusion of local governments in ESD within UNESCO's *Global Action Programme (GAP) on ESD*, the framework for implementing ESD after 2015.

In line with the theme of the conference, which emphasized both the achievements of the past decade and new directions for the future, we hereby enact this Ordinance. We are determined to address ESD earnestly, recognizing it as indispensable for sustainable development, and to strengthen our collective efforts in cooperation with local communities and organizations both within and outside Japan, thereby contributing to the realization of a peaceful and sustainable society.

(Objective)

Article 1: The objective of this Ordinance is to contribute to ensuring healthy and culturally enriched lives for current and future citizens by establishing fundamental principles and clarifying respective responsibilities regarding the promotion of ESD, with the aim of building a society capable of sustainable development that pursues economic growth in harmony with a rich environment (hereafter referred to as a "sustainable society").

(Definitions)

Article 2: The terms used in this Ordinance have the following meanings.

(1) ESD refers to Education for Sustainable Development and encompasses all learning

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Okayama ESD Promotion Commission (RCE Okayama)

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and activities that link social issues with everyday life, create new values, and transform behavior to build a sustainable society.

(2) Educational Institutions refer to those established by the City among those listed in Article 30 of the Act on the Organization and Operation of Local Educational Administration (Act No. 162 of 1956).

(3) Citizens refer to those who reside, work, or are enrolled in a city educational institution.

(4) Citizens' organizations refer to organizations that operate within city limits.

(5) Business operators refer to individuals, corporations, and other organizations that conduct business within city limits.

(Catchphrase)

Article 3: The catchphrase of this Ordinance shall be the "E (*ehmono-wo*: good things) S (*shison-no*: future generations) D (*dai-made*: passing on to) Ordinance".

(Fundamental Principle)

Article 4: Recognizing that all of us, across generations, live in association with future generations and the global environment, and that it contributes to environmental preservation, stability of citizens' lives, welfare improvement, and the inheritance of culture and history, ESD must be systematically and comprehensively promoted in all fields linked to building a sustainable society, including the environment, economy, and social culture, with each sector playing appropriate roles in collaboration and coordination.

(Responsibility of the City)

Article 5

- The City shall formulate and implement measures for ESD in a comprehensive and planned manner, based on the fundamental principles outlined in the preceding Article (hereafter referred to as the "fundamental principles").
- The City shall provide advice and implement other necessary measures to ensure that ESD is promoted within the city through appropriate collaboration among the diverse stakeholders involved in realizing a sustainable society.
- The City shall take the initiative to contribute to the realization of a sustainable society

based on an awareness of its significant role in social and economic activities.

(Responsibility of Educational Institutions)

Article 6: Educational institutions shall strive to comprehensively implement ESD-related initiatives in their educational activities, based on the fundamental principles.

(Role of citizens and citizens' organizations)

Article 7:

- Citizens and citizens' organizations shall, based on the fundamental principles, act in their daily lives with consideration for building a sustainable society.
- Citizens and their organizations shall actively participate in activities related to the creation of a sustainable society and collaborate and cooperate with the City, educational institutions, business operators, and others to promote ESD.

(Role of Business Operators)

Article 8:

- Business operators shall, based on the fundamental principles, voluntarily and proactively take measures in their business activities consistent with the creation of a sustainable society.
- Business operators shall endeavor to cooperate with ESD activities conducted by citizens' organizations while employing the expertise of their business activities.

(Cooperation with Regions Within and Outside Japan)

Article 9: When promoting ESD, the City shall seek cooperation with international organizations, the national government, and regions both within and outside Japan that are working on ESD.

Supplementary Provisions

This Ordinance shall come into force on the date of promulgation.

05 Okayama ESD Promotion Commission (RCE Okayama): 20 Years of History



Okayama ESD Promotion Commission : 20 Years of Highlights(2005-2025)



2001

Apr. ■■■

- Launch of the Okayama City Environmental Partnership Project

2005

Jan. ■■■

- The UN DESD (2005-2014) implemented

Feb. ■■■

- Okayama City's commitment to the RCE declared by the Mayor of City of Okayama in his policy speech at the Okayama City Council Regular Meeting

Apr. ■■■

- Establishment of the Okayama Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Promotion Commission
- Launch of The Okayama ESD Project
- Formulation of the Okayama ESD Project Fundamental Plan
- Establishment of a subsidy program for the organizations implementing The Okayama ESD Project (ongoing under the title, Okayama ESD Project Implementation Support Subsidy)

July ■■■

- Okayama ESD Promotion Commission acknowledged as one of the first seven Regional Centres of Expertise on ESD (RCEs) by the United Nations University



Sept. ■■■

- 1st Japanese Interministerial Meeting on the UN DESD held

Oct. ■■■

- UNESCO releases "International Implementation Scheme for the UN DESD"

Dec. ■■■

- "Basic Act on Education" revised and enforced in Japan

2002

Aug.-Sept. ■■■

- Presentation about the Okayama City Environmental Partnership Project given at a side event of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, South Africa)
- The 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development held (Johannesburg, South Africa)



Johannesburg Summit

Dec. ■■■

- Okayama City's proposal "Save the Earth Citizens Registration Rally" presented to the UNESCO Headquarters
- At the recommendation of Japan, the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UN DESD) adopted at the 57th Session of the UN General Assembly

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20 Years of History

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2007

Apr. ■■■

- Okayama University designated as the Okayama University UNESCO Chair on Research and ESD by UNESCO
- Promotion of ESD added to the new Okayama City Kominkans (CLCs) Basic Policy

June ■■■

- Launch of the Japanese Diet (national legislature) Members Caucus for ESD Promotion

July ■■■

- Okayama University and Okayama City sign the first ESD Agreement

2009

Apr. ■■■

- At the halfway mark of the UN DESD, the World Conference on ESD held (Bonn, Germany)

2006

Jan. ■■■

- Japanese Government's Dialogue on the UN ESD held

July ■■■

- 1st Okayama ESD Network Exchange Meeting held (ongoing as Okayama ESD Project Implementing Organizations Exchange Meeting)

2008

Feb. ■■■

- 1st Working-level Meeting of Japanese RCE held

2012

June ■■■

- UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) held (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil)

Sept. ■■■

- "Harmony of Natural Preservation & Agriculture" project presented the RCE Awards 2012 (Certificate of Honour)

Oct. ■■■

- Launch of the "ESD Week" to strengthen the promotion of ESD, during which various groups organise ESD-related programs, such as lectures and workshops (held annually until 2020)

2013

Apr. ■■■

- ESD promotion positioned in the Okayama City Basic Plan for Education Promotion

Nov. ■■■

- Establishment of the Okayama ESD portal site, "Okayama ESD Navi" (currently "Okayama SDGs and ESD Navi")
- "Kyoyama ESD Environment Project (KEEP) to Promote Regional ESD" presented the RCE Awards 2013 (Outstanding Flagship Project)



9th Global RCE Conference

2014

Mar. ■■■

- 7th Working-level Meeting of Japanese RCE held

Sept. ■■■

- Enforcement of the Okayama City ESD Promotion Ordinance

Nov. ■■■

- Stakeholder meetings in conjunction with the 2014 UNESCO World Conference on ESD held:
 - Kominkan-CLC International Conference on ESD
 - 9th Global RCE Conference
 - International Forum on UNESCO ASPnet
 - UNESCO ESD Youth Conference
 - 8th Biennial Meeting of the International Network of Teacher Education Institutions (INTEI) Associated with the UNESCO Chair on Reorienting Teacher Education to Address Sustainability
- "The Okayama ESD Project - Decade in Okayama 'ESD Okayama Model' & Release of 'New Okayama ESD Project Fundamental Plan'" presented the RCE Awards 2014 (Outstanding Flagship Project)
- The 2014 UNESCO World Conference on ESD held (Nagoya, Japan)
- Stakeholder meetings in conjunction with the 2014 UNESCO World Conference on ESD held (Okayama, Japan)(Nov.) (See ☆)

Dec. ■■■

- Launch of the UNESCO Global Action Programme on ESD (GAP: 2015-2019)

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2015

Apr. ...

- Establishment of the ESD Okayama Award (ongoing)
- Development of the Okayama ESD Project 2015-2019 Fundamental Plan
- Okayama City selected as one of the UNESCO Key Partners of the GAP

June ...

- "Children of Fujita: Learn in Community and Develop the Future" presented the RCE Awards 2015 (Outstanding Flagship Project)

- 1st Roundtable on ESD held

Sept. ...

- The "2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" adopted at the UN Summit (Sept.) (NY, USA)

Oct. ...

- Launch of the Okayama ESD Forum (ongoing)



ESD Okayama Award



Registered as a UNESCO Global Network of Learning City



Awarded the UNESCO-Japan Prize on ESD

2016

Mar. ...

- Okayama City recognized as a UNESCO Global Network of Learning City

Oct. ...

- "The Okayama ESD Project" awarded the UNESCO-Japan Prize on ESD
- "Okayama Creature Village Project" presented RCE Awards 2016 (Acknowledged Flagship Project)
- Okayama ESD Forum and ESD Okayama Award ceremony held as a single event (ongoing)

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2018

Aug. ■■■

- Establishment of the Youth Activity Subsidy (ongoing)

2017

Jan. ■■■

- Okayama City receives the UNESCO Learning City Award 2017

2019

Aug. ■■■

- The Exciting Future SDGs Festival held (ongoing)



The Exciting Future SDGs Festival

2020

Feb. ■■■

- The SDGs Forum 2020 co-hosted with Okayama University



The SDGs Forum 2020

Apr. ■■■

- Establishment of the Okayama SDGs Award in collaboration with industry, government, academia and the public (annually held until 2024)

Dec. ■■■

- The SDGs Forum in Okayama held by industry, government, academia and the public (annually held until 2024)
- Education for Sustainable Development: Towards achieving the SDGs (ESD for 2030) (2020-2030) acknowledged by the 74th Session of the UN General Assembly

2021

Feb. ■■■

- 14th Working-level Meeting of Japanese RCE held online

May ■■■

- Formulation of the Okayama ESD Project 2020-2030 Fundamental Plan

Nov. ■■■

- "ESD University and Technical Vocational Education and Training College Student Internship Program" presented the RCE Awards 2021 (Outstanding Flagship Project)

2022

Feb. ■■■

- Launch of the SDGs Sea and River Forum 2022 (ongoing)



The SDGs Sea and River Forum 2022

Oct. ■■■

- "ESD Café x SDGs Series" presented the RCE Awards 2022 (Acknowledged Flagship Project)

2023

Oct. ■■■

- "The Whole-Community Approach of ESD in Minan Area of Okayama City" presented the RCE Awards 2023 (Outstanding Flagship Project)



Received the RCE Award for Excellence at the 13th Global RCE Conference

Nov. ■■■

- Recommendation on Education for Peace and Human Rights, International Understanding, Cooperation, Fundamental Freedoms, Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development" adopted at the 42nd Session of the UNESCO General Conference

2024

Dec. ■■■

- "SDGs Project on Marine Environment: Let's Save the Sea and the Rivers" presented the RCE Awards 2024 (Outstanding Flagship Project)

2025

Oct. ■■■

- 14th Global RCE Conference held

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Research into the Measured Effects of ESD

Hiroko Shibakawa, Okayama University

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Preface

Research Purpose and Focus

This qualitative study aimed to elucidate the transformative process of educational practices targeting the building of a sustainable society, using the Modified Grounded Theory Approach (M-GTA) as the methodology of choice. The M-GTA is an improved version of the GTA that is easier for beginners to implement and is widely used in human service fields such as education, nursing, and welfare. In addition to answering questions from researchers and their perspectives, the M-GTA also features the important quality of allowing the extraction of meaning structures while paying close attention to the participants' narrative. For data analysis, the focus was on the participant, and analyses were performed from their perspective. In light of these points, this study presupposes that the researcher is not simply an observer in the research process but rather an active creator of meaning in relation to participants.[1] [2]

Survey Design and Participants

This study was conducted between January and March 2025. Purposive sampling was used to select eleven individuals who had participated in the Okayama Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Project for over two years, recruited through the project office. The sample included five educators (three high school teachers, two elementary/junior high school teachers), three business/municipal employees, and three community activists. Six participants had 2–5 years of project involvement, and five had more than five years. Individual interviews lasted 60–90 minutes (mainly in person, with some conducted online) and were held in Okayama City. The study design was cross-sectional.

This study sought to elucidate the following three points through the narratives of various participants in the Okayama ESD Project.

- 1) How are the basic concepts of the project (i.e. problem-solving, critical thinking, collaborative, behavioural change, and community contribution skills) being developed?
- 2) What are the circumstances or events that cause the development of these skills to change? That is, what gives them meaning and value?
- 3) What issues should the Okayama ESD Project prioritise going forward?

Data Collection and Analytical Procedures

This study was conducted after obtaining approval from the relevant ethics review committee and related parties. The author of this study carried out interviews with participants while building trust with them and carefully extracted meanings related to internal changes and practice implementation from their narratives. Further, the recordings of the interviews were transcribed and initially categorised through outsourcing to Tinners, Inc. and Stat Agent, Inc. When outsourcing these processes of transcription and categorisation, care was taken to maintain a dispassionate and objective approach so as not to allow the author's perspective and preconceptions to excessively influence the participants' narratives. The author also judiciously considered the possibility that outsourcing the initial

[1] Kinoshita, Y. (2007). *Live Lecture: M-GTA Practical Qualitative Methodology*. Koubundou.

[2] Kinoshita, Y. (2016). Basic Qualities of M-GTA and Analysis Methods: The Verifiability of Qualitative Research. *Medical and Nursing Research*, 13(1), 1–11.

process could affect subsequent analyses. In creating the final concepts, the researcher confirmed the context and meaning of the narratives and wrote out theoretical descriptions aligned with the M-GTA framework.

Positioning and Use of Data

As outlined above, this study aimed to theoretically describe, using the M-GTA methodological framework, the structure of change in educational practices through participants' narratives. The primary information source for the creation of the categories using M-GTA was interviews (n=11), although surveys (n=14) were also employed to better capture data trends and support supplementary coding.

Explanatory Notes regarding the Primary Programs Associated with the Okayama ESD Project

- **ESD Coordinator Training:** an annual training provided for personnel responsible for solving local issues, helping with the establishment of a common language and procedure.
- **ESD Cafe:** a space for discussing themes from various perspectives, such as those of local citizens, schools, businesses, and non-profit organisations (NPOs).
- **ESD Okayama Award:** an international award honouring and sharing outstanding ESD practices in Japan and abroad.
- **Okayama UNESCO School High School Network Practice Exchange Meeting:** a meeting among high school students for the presentation and exchange of practices.
- **Okayama ESD Forum:** an annual forum for award-winning organisations and initiatives of junior and senior high school students.
- **Okayama Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)/ESD Navigator:** Okayama City's official portal site, collecting articles and information on programs.
- **Global RCE Conference (held in Okayama):** an international conference held at the United Nations University. Held in 2014 and 2025 in Okayama.

Chapter 1: Internalisation of Ideals and Changes to Values

Participants

The study sample encompassed 11 interview participants, identified anonymously in this paper as Participants A to K. They are referred to in this work using their symbols and attributes, as described in the following list: At the time of the study, A was a private business employee from the younger generation; B was a high school instructor at a UNESCO School from the younger generation; C was a private business employee; D was a high school instructor in a managerial position; E was a local government employee; F was an elementary school instructor (formerly at a UNESCO School) from the younger generation; G was a junior high school instructor (formerly at a UNESCO School) from the

[3] The transcription and initial categorisation were entrusted to Tinners, Inc. and Stat Agent, Inc. Approval was obtained from members of the Ethical Research Committee. The study was explained to the participants and other related participants in advance, and their consent was obtained prior to conducting the study work.

younger generation; H was a community centre employee (with World Congress experience); I was a high school instructor (with experience at a UNESCO School); J was an NPO employee from the younger generation; and K was an NPO employee.

For the surveys that were conducted, the sample comprised the three additional participants, identified as L to N, as follows: L was an employee in a managerial position; M was an elementary school instructor in a managerial position; N was a junior high school instructor in a managerial position.

In presenting quotations, attributions follow the format '(A), (B),...', consistent with the convention in Japanese research reports.

1.1 Reception of the Education for Sustainable Development Ideals and their Redefinition

It was easy for participants to abstractly understand the general idea of ESD at the early stages of learning. However, when participants became involved in implementation and discussion, they deepened their own understanding and experiences and were gradually able to speak about it in their own words. This transitional process is clearly illustrated through the following narratives.

- *"I felt like the words were difficult, but upon listening to presentations, I understood what was going on". (A, private business employee, younger generation)*
- *"I was aware of the SDGs at my company, and I came to understand ESD bit by bit from there". (C, private business employee)*
- *"It was hard for me to see what ESDs were". (E, local government employee)*
- *"If I look at the issues through the lens of the environment, I start seeing things that I hadn't seen before". (D, high school teacher, managerial position)*
- *"The training gave me a clear picture of what to do, and as I gained more experience, I was able to do it". (H, community centre employee)*

These narratives showcase that the reception of the ESD ideals progressed through stages, as described herein: an impetus for understanding (through training or presentations from others) > application of own experience > acquisition of terminology and perspectives. Above all, the acquisition of perspective (in the narratives above, exemplified through D's description of the "lens of the environment") becomes an opportunity to change the everyday criteria used for the evaluation of ESD.

In particular, acquiring a new "lens" or perspective, such as the "environmental lens", proved to be a critical turning point for participants in updating their daily criteria for judgement and practice.

1.2 Transitioning towards Translating Ideals into Personal Principles

If participants deepen their understanding of these ideals, they can then translate them into daily practices. This translation process is process can be observed not only in the individual, but also as a concrete change in the organisation they work for and in their field of activity. This creates opportunities for actualising them, specifically through updated practices such as strengthening connections with external groups, designing questions, and becoming accountable. This translation is reflected in various professional contexts, as seen in the following participant accounts.

- *"I invited more people from outside the company and met more with more people from outside the company". (C, private business employee)*
- *"Designing questions was the most difficult part, but I started to learn from the challenges". (I, high school instructor)*

- “We discuss how young people can show off their strengths”. (J, NPO employee, younger generation)
- “The experience of explaining it in front of others deepened my own understanding”. (F, elementary school teacher, younger generation)

In particular, it is worth mentioning that the deepening of personal understanding about ESD was connected to decision-making among teams, in schools and businesses. Opportunities to present and explain were not merely useful for communication but also served to restructure thought and review rules for evaluation and implementation.

The process of translating ideals into action was not limited to individual development; it also brought about concrete changes at the organisational and team level in schools, local governments, and workplaces. Specifically, opportunities for public explanation and reflection played a unique role in reconstructing collective thinking and in re-examining operational policies and evaluative standards from new angles.

1.3 Signs of Internalisation from Looking at Narratives

The progression of the internalisation of ESD ideals was realised through the establishment of related terminology, improved explanatory ability, and assertion of continued motivation.

- “ESD is a difficult word, but when I listened to presentations, my understanding deepened”. (A, private business employee, younger generation)
- “When I saw my superior’s presentation, I wanted to try it too”. (B, high school instructor, younger generation)
- “I realised that I needed a plan to keep things going, not just to do it all at once”. (G, junior high school instructor, younger generation)

These findings demonstrate that the understanding of ESD were formed through individuals’ concrete participation, whereby experiences in taking part in ESD-related initiatives were linked to subsequent actions and institutional design. Measuring the degree of maturity of this internalisation is an important indicator of the emergence of ESD ideas, which will then endure as an underlying mechanism without relying on the individual’s work.

Of particular importance is the appearance of systemic “thinking”—a shift away from individual reliance and towards the creation of mechanisms that ensure the ongoing sustainability of ESD-related activities. This emergence of awareness around institutionalisation and system design marks a key stage of mature internalisation.

Summary

- Ideals are redefined in one’s own words through partaking in presentations, training, and discussions.
- Translation into actions is realised through practice updating, such as collaboration with external groups, designing questions, and becoming accountable.
- Establishing terminology, explanatory ability, and assertion of continued motivation are demonstrations of the progression of internalisation.

In sum, the growth in vocabulary, improved capacity for explanation, and the consistent intent to continue engagement, all demonstrate the deepening progression of internalisation for ESD concepts.

Chapter 2 considers how the internalisation of ESD ideals spreads through encountering other cultures, generations, and networking, and if it broadens one’s horizons.

Chapter 2:

Broadening Horizons through Diverse Experiences and New Encounters

This chapter demonstrates how to plan opportunities for encounters and connections, how comparison, aspiration, and impetus can be connected to own change, and how networks can embed learning into everyday life.

2.1 The Influence of Connections Across Cultures and Generations

The Okayama ESD project regularly hosts the ESD Cafe, produces reports on youth activities working towards the SDGs, organizes networking events, and presents awards, which are all initiatives that normalise the process of meeting new people. Design principles for creating meeting spaces (i.e. open dialogue, cross-barrier communication, and collaborative reflection) were shared with participants through regular discussions, collaborative presentations, and reflections, which were emphasised over one-off events.

- *“I thought it was cool to watch how high school students present in English. I thought I’d like to try it myself”. (A, private business employee, younger generation)*

This type of narrative demonstrates that opportunities to take the stage and observe others can increase self-efficacy through aspiration, bringing out the intention to act. Further, as participants of different generations and perspectives communicate in a specific place, they exchange local history and culture as well as techniques and expressions new to young people, collectively fostering an attitude to avoid viewing a given problem exclusively from a single perspective. Repeated connections can build a bridge towards action and help individuals not simply stop at a fleeting feeling of effectiveness. Specifically, these recurring interactions not only foster fleeting emotions but also serve as an important bridge towards sustained action by normalising opportunities for connections and dialogue.

2.2 The Opportunity for Internal Change through Comparison, Aspiration, and Impetus

The Okayama ESD Project’s “Challenge to Meet Others” offered leverage for participants to engage in internal change. Here, the process of comparing oneself with others does not involve simply value judgement but also acts as a mirror reflecting own possibilities.

- *“ESD is a difficult word, but when I listened to others' presentations, my understanding deepened”. (A, private business employee, younger generation)*

Deepening of understanding is unlikely to occur if the only explanation provided stems from a third party. By demonstrating concrete actions that can be recreated (e.g. procedures for activities, discussion methods, or how to make records) and encouraging a cycle of trial and reflection, individuals can take the first step towards gaining a more in-depth understanding without feeling helpless. Further, organisational decision-making can be supported through connecting related topics to external standards.

- *“When we had the opportunity to learn about the SDGs at work, it turned into discussions about what we can do to develop them going forward. This was connected to my understanding of ESD”. (C, private business employee)*

Such a connection configures more than the personal internalisation of ESD ideals. It contributes to the formation of organisational foundations (e.g. resource allocation and goal setting) and affords impetus for sustainability-related practices. In addition, presenting specific models of imitation—detailed procedures for activities, ways of conducting dialogue, and recordkeeping methods—enable individuals to move beyond helplessness and take the next step forward, supported by an explicit cycle of trial and reflection.

2.3 Forming Networks and Learning Diversity

A distinctive feature of the Okayama ESD Project is its function as a learning platform designed by social networks. ESD Cafés and informational sessions serve for information exchange, making overlapping roles visible (e.g. a parent, citizen, instructor, and worker), and as a framework for the circulation of information, opportunities, and advice.

- *“While speaking with the people from the area, I felt like I too was connecting with ESD”. (I, high school instructor)*
- *“The facilitator was proactive in getting involved in the training, giving participants an opportunity to start speaking on their own”. (J, NPO employee, younger generation)*

Learning while developing—and through—relationships encourage people to take ownership of their own work, while narratives concerning connections with the natural regional resources allow individuals to understand that networks also play a role in the vision for the future of a given region.

- *“I want to create a natural cycle of replanting trees that have been cut down, and create an environment where my neighbours also have the same thought”. (C, private company employee)*

Importantly, this project was effective in establishing a routine of turning common questions into words (e.g. who, what, when, why, and how) and sharing the answers and questions to maintain a minimum level of agreement among participants, even as they “come and go”. This helped ensure that learning was not an ad-hoc “event” but was firmly established in everyday practice.

The establishment of routines for verbalising and recording shared questions ensured minimum agreement even amid participant turnover, allowing learning to become embedded in daily practice rather than remain a sporadic “event”.

Summary

- Connecting with other cultures and generations heightens self-efficacy through aspiration and recreation, bringing forth an intent to act.
- Comparison provides a blueprint for how to take the next step if individuals are given concrete tasks that can be recreated.
- Networks establish learning in daily life based on shared questions and by sharing both verbalisation and records.

These three elements—aspirational encounters, blueprints for action through concrete examples, and networks based on shared language and recording—form a foundation enabling ESD participation to evolve into sustained daily practice.

Note: The responses of Participants L–N, who only partook in the survey, revealed the presence of a strong interest in making ESD activities a part of daily life and systematising them and sharing their burden; those at the management level clearly demanded a system that avoided micromanagement and supported continuity (no quote provided).

Chapter 3 clarifies how encounters and the network foster participants’ autonomy and self-reflection, as well as support their growth process.

Chapter 3: The Process of Growth through Autonomy and Self-Reflection

Opportunities were deliberately designed for Okayama ESD Project participants to discuss, question, and reflect on their own practices. These systems served both as mechanisms for information exchange and as learning processes to **deepen understanding, cultivate an inquisitive attitude, and re-establish values**. This chapter examines how opportunities for narrative, inquiry, and reflection systematically foster autonomy and self-reflection among participants.

3.1 Deepening Personal Understanding through Communication

The Okayama ESD Project established various spaces (i.e. ESD Cafés, reports on youth activities in support of the SDGs, networking events, and ESD award ceremonies) for participants to discuss their own practices. It is important to highlight that these spaces go beyond serving merely as presentation venues; they also function as spaces for reflection, allowing participants to create meaning in own practice through discussion.

- *“I could now talk about why I did what I did. By being able to talk about it, I was able to find my next collaborator”. (J, NPO employee, younger generation)*

This narrative demonstrates that providing explanations to others can simultaneously deepen one’s own understanding and improve collaboration with others. Accordingly, narratives function to convey information and as **acts of restructuring own practices and reestablishing connections with others**. Furthermore, participants from the younger generation stated that narratives helped them feel that they, too, could take action.

- *“I think I might be able to do something too”. (A, private business employee, younger generation)*

The results of the survey also repeatedly confirmed that by constructing narratives, participants were able to organise their thoughts and gain a sense of responsibility for communicating with others. These findings reveal that the chance to verbally explain their own experiences not only deepened individual understanding but also facilitated the reconstruction of practices and relationships. In particular, for younger generation participants, narrative emerged as evidence of self-efficacy—the feeling that “I can do this too”—and as a driver of collaboration. Opportunities for constructing and sharing narratives thus created a cycle of making meaning from experience, promoting both internal clarity and external dissemination.

3.2 The Difficulties of Inquiry and Fostering an Inquisitive Attitude

The Okayama ESD Project placed importance on participants engaging in continuous inquiry, as it featured various related mechanisms scattered throughout different facets of the project to foster this attitude. In the ESD Cafés, a different theme was presented at each session, encouraging participants to express their own perspectives, ask questions, and discuss with others.

- *“ESD is a difficult word, but when I listened to presentations, my understanding deepened”. (A, private business employee, younger generation)*
- *“I came to see that it’s not that it’s difficult, but it’s about finding ways to keep it up at school or home”. (F, elementary school teacher, younger generation)*

These narratives demonstrate the process through which abstract ideas become concrete practices. Asking questions is not an easy task, but the related difficulties come from finding the starting point for learning.

While it is difficult to generate questions, and participants often found “the starting point” challenging, the project’s explicit design for collective inquiry—such as routine sharing of questions and deliberation—helped nurture an ongoing attitude of exploration. As highlighted by both the interviews (such as teacher I’s earlier comment) and survey responses, this focus on inquiry fostered not only practical skills but also supported a redefinition of the meaning and purpose of practice itself.

The Okayama ESD Project, through the sharing of questions and creating of opportunities for deliberation with others, established a way to sustain participants’ inquisitive attitude.

In the survey, respondents noted that they understood the connection between ESD and the SDGs, and realised that community centre projects were themselves related to ESD. This confirms that there has been and continues to be progress in bridging the gap between abstract concepts and implementation.

3.3 Establishing Reflection on Narrative and Predicting Transformation

The Okayama ESD Project intentionally designed structured spaces to foster introspection (e.g. informational meetings and reflection sessions), allowing individuals to share their thoughts and **promoting self-reflection regarding decision-making on subsequent actions**.

- *“I want to decide what to stop doing and what to do more of next year”. (E, local government employee)*
- *“I want to keep doing these kinds of things”. (G, junior high school instructor, younger generation)*

These interviews and survey responses revealed that the deliberate structuring of opportunities for reflection led participants to shift from mere impressions toward more organised, forward-looking planning—including actions for the following year and developing long-term visions and strategies. Through repeated experiences, self-reflection enabled the restructuring of values and increasingly connected personal transformation with broader social perspectives.

In the survey, respondents repeatedly mentioned that they came to think more of the next generation and the world as a whole than of short-term benefits, and that they developed an image of the future along with a stronger sense of how to build it together. This shows that **value can be re-established through self-reflection and that personal transformation is a process that connects social perspectives**.

Summary

- Narrative spaces such as the ESD Cafés and informational sessions deepen one’s own understanding and deliver opportunities for individuals to reestablish their relationships with others.
- Opportunities for asking questions, such as the ESD Cafés and training sessions, foster an inquisitive attitude and promote the redefinition of practices.
- Opportunities for reflection, such as informational or reflection sessions, support action and value transformation through self-reflection.

Taken together, these mechanisms—a systematised approach to narrative, inquiry, and structured reflection—provided a foundation for enabling participants to grow through both autonomy and self-reflection, supporting action and value transformation as continuous, self-reinforcing cycles.

Chapter 4 clarifies how the development of autonomy and self-reflection helps advance these practices through collaboration with others and community building.

Chapter 4: Collaboration and the Process of Community Building

The Okayama ESD Project intentionally designed methods for collaboration. It emphasises more than simple information exchange and distribution of roles—it focuses on the processes of **sharing common goals and building mutual learning relationships**.

This chapter discusses not only role or information sharing, but also the intentional design of inclusive, sustainable collaboration—focusing on the creation of egalitarian spaces, the development of attitudes, and the expansion of community through practice.

4.1 The Quality of the Relationships Created by the Project’s Spaces

A feature of the Okayama ESD Project was its continual establishment of **spaces for people with diverse perspectives to talk together on equal footing** (e.g. ESD Cafés, informational sessions, and trainings), enabling the **exchange of shared experiences and discussions that redefined common problems**.

- *“The facilitator was proactive in getting involved in the training, giving participants an opportunity to start speaking on their own”. (J, NPO employee, younger generation)*
- *“The young people started talking even when left to their own devices. The plan focuses on how to demonstrate our strengths”. (J, NPO employee, younger generation)*

These narratives demonstrate how the design of these spaces ensures participants can speak up easily and that the roles remain fluid. Thus, the Okayama ESD Project is based on a **mutual discussion format**—where the role of the facilitator is coordination of relationships—and **not on a unidirectional lecture format**. Importantly, such design resulted in a repeated pattern where participants requested more workshops and expressed a desire for continued involvement—indicating that positive collaborative experiences produce repeat engagement and organically support community sustain ability, not by obligation but by intrinsic motivation.

4.2 The Conditions for Fostering Collaboration and Overlapping Roles

Collaboration involves more than jointly creating something together. Accordingly, the Okayama ESD Project fostered foundations for collaboration by visualising the overlap of roles (e.g. local citizens who are also teachers and parents who are also businesspeople).

- *“While speaking with the people from the area, I felt like I too was connecting with ESD”. (I, high school instructor)*
- *“I invited more people from outside the company, and met more people from outside the company”. (C, private company employee)*

Such narratives show that the **awareness of various roles, not just one’s own perspective, expands one’s view of collaboration**. Further, the Okayama ESD Project established opportunities for people to discuss the same theme with others holding different perspectives through events such as ESD Cafés and award ceremonies, and emphasised **sharing questions that are held in common**.

Survey results also confirmed that opportunities for discussing with people holding different perspectives enabled participants to organise and clarify their own thoughts, deepening perspectives for collective problem-solving in both schools and communities.

4.3 Sustainability of Communities and the Beginnings of Institutionalisation

To ensure that collaboration does not end after only one event, it is necessary to **plan for continuity and maintain a sense of connection**. The Okayama ESD Project establishes a routine of sharing the who, what, when, why, and how through regular meetings, sharing of information online and record keeping.

- *“I realised that I needed a plan to keep things going, not just to do it all at once”. (G, junior high school instructor, younger generation)*
- *“I want to decide what to stop doing and what to do more of next year”. (E, local government employee)*

These narratives demonstrate awareness of the need to create a system that does not rely on individual effort. To make this awareness a part of the system, the Okayama ESD Project emphasises **verbalising questions shared in common and sharing of records**, forming a foundation for supporting a sustainable community.

The institutionalisation of such routines—sharing questions, records, and establishing regular meetings—meant that the community’s sustainability was grounded not in exceptional events or the efforts of individual leaders, but in foundational procedures reproducible by anyone in the community.

Summary

- Collaboration and community formation in the Okayama ESD project are supported by three elements.
- The three elements include repetition through positive experiences of collaborative practice; building inclusive relationships based on listening; and expanding regional cooperation through interdisciplinary and intergenerational networks..
- The establishment of these elements enables the formation of sustainable communities.

In sum, the Okayama ESD Project demonstrated that inclusive spaces, repeated collaboration, and routine systematisation fostered sustainable community building—driven by intrinsic motivation for involvement, the cultivation of attitudes of listening and inclusion, and the establishment of practical habitual procedures. These mutually reinforcing foundations made possible the ongoing development of community and collective practices, not as one-time events but as perpetually renewing cycles of collaborative learning and action.

Chapter 5 expounds upon how this foundation of collaboration leads to greater involvement and action.

Chapter 5: Involvement, Action, Inheritance, Institutionalisation, Spread, and Evaluation

In this chapter, we consider participants' actions as stakeholders, how these actions spread, how organisations and communities take root, and whether these actions are maintained and improved through review and evaluation. An important point is the cycle of **individual realisation > taking small actions > expansion through collaboration > institutionalisation > evaluation and correction**, which is supported by the Okayama ESD Project's intentionally designed spaces and records.

A key focus is the intentional creation of cycles, in which individual realisation leads to small actions, which then expand through collaboration, systematisation, and continuous evaluation and adaptation. The Okayama ESD Project supports these cycles through its explicitly designed spaces and record keeping.

5.1 Development of Ownership and Taking Action

Ownership of the situation starts from the lived experience, which makes a distant issue one's own. The Okayama ESD Project continuously created spaces for presentations, discussions, and experiences wherein participants could start taking small actions and were given concrete tasks that they could recreate.

- *"I realised that even personal experiences are ok. I felt like there were fewer hurdles than I thought". (A, private business employee, younger generation)*
- *"There were a lot of opportunities to talk directly to high school students, which made me look at things from a different point of view". (C, private business employee)*
- *"We discussed how young people can show off their strengths". (J, NPO employee, younger generation)*

These small actions go beyond the individual and serve to reshape one's relationship with the surrounding environment. Importantly, close interactions (such as cross-generational exchanges) provided new perspectives, lowering psychological barriers and stimulating the motivation to act. The process of reframing narratives in the first person ("ownership") and repeated implementation trials was vital for transforming distant issues into concrete personal agendas.

5.2 Expansion of Practices and Societal Spread

Actions spread through comparison with others, aspirations, and collaborative projects. The Okayama ESD Project systematically secured **opportunities for encounters that cross barriers** and support activity linking.

- *"At the World Congress, students took the initiative and created an executive committee that looked past school types. I thought there was no way not to learn from that". (D, high school instructor, managerial position)*
- *"I felt like the idea of ESD connecting the world is wonderful. Practices in one particular area should be useful for other places too". (K, NPO employee)*
- *"We created a cycle of nurturing teachers. We draw up a list of candidates for instructors, give them training in advance, and make them the main instructors of the actual event". (E, local government employee)*

These practices spread in three ways, as follows: 1) crossing barriers (e.g. schools, areas, businesses, and governments), 2) role transition (learner > communicator), and 3) external connections (between areas, countries, and

institutions). Of special note, the transition from “learner” to “teacher” set in motion a local cycle of diffusion—stimulating both personal growth and community-wide development of expertise. The expansion of ESD practices was characterised not only by scaling-up but also by the deepening of talent pools and the creation of new pathways for transmission across boundaries.

5.3 A System for Inheritance, Institutionalisation, and Evaluation

Making practices sustainable requires the creation of a system not reliant on individual action. For this purpose, the Okayama ESD Project established a structure for the continuation and sharing of sustainable practices, as well as a basis for evaluation through the creation of curricula, training systems, and use of common records.

- *“During a school reform, environmental education was established as a school-required subject”. (D, high school instructor, managerial position)*
- *“In the coordinator training, we promoted attendees who came multiple times as candidates for instructors, provided them training in advance, and made them the main instructors of the actual event”. (E, local government employee)*
- *“I realised that I needed a plan to keep things going, not just to do it all at once”. (G, junior high school instructor, younger generation)*
- *“Everyone in the area began to think about the abbreviation ESD and policy. It’s being established locally”. (K, NPO employee)*

Institutionalisation progresses via three paradigms – a) **frameworks** (i.e. curricula, training, responsibility systems, and budgeting), b) **routines** (regular meetings, records, and reflection), and c) **shared knowledge** (shared language and evaluation criteria).

Ongoing evaluation included both the aggregation of outcomes and the reconsideration of what should be discontinued or expanded the following year and the review of resource allocation, thus guaranteeing ongoing improvement and sustainability.

Summary

- Ownership is established through small actions, concrete tasks that can be recreated, and repeated trials.
- Actions expand through encounters that cross barriers, the shifting of roles and external connections, and then spread throughout the area.
- Inheritance, institutionalisation, and evaluation can be continued if they are considered as procedures for improvement and are supported by frameworks, routines, and shared knowledge.

Overall, the Okayama ESD Project demonstrated that cycles of personal realisation, collaborative expansion, and institutionalisation – anchored in routine, shared systems, and ongoing evaluation – are key to producing sustained impact and community-wide transformation. Survey-only participants (L–N) affirmed the importance of routinising daily practice, sharing labour, and improving recordkeeping, aligning closely with the directions outlined in organisational expansion and evaluation.

Chapter 6 clarifies how this kind of practice is established as a system and culture and how it spreads both in and out of an area.

Chapter 6:

Establishing Systems and Culture and Spreading Across Areas

Based on survey results and narrative throughlines, this chapter examines the process by which the Okayama ESD Project's practices establish both systems (procedures and operations) and culture (behaviour and relationships), spread both within and outside of the local area. Excessive generalisations are avoided, with a focus on the space and design principles particular to Okayama.

6.1 The Process of Institutionalisation: From Trials to Procedure

The Okayama ESD Project has incorporated each of the initiatives into the system through the following stages: Trial > Proceduralisation (Standardisation) > Budgeting and Responsibility Assignment > Growth Evaluation. As shown by the M-GTA analysis results and the narrative throughlines, the three factors of common language, discussion spaces, and sharing records are important triggers for institutionalisation.

- **Institutionalisation of Common Language:** The perspectives shared at coordinator trainings and high school network practice exchange meetings are clearly stated in annual plans for schools and places of work, training themes, and evaluation criteria. In schools, one can see how a “perspective of sustainability” is incorporated into comprehensive learning and school-mandated subjects.
 - *“During a school reform, environmental education was established as a school-required subject”. (D, high school instructor, managerial position)*
- **Institutionalisation of Discussion Spaces:** Methods for speaking and listening with confidence developed at ESD Cafés and similar processes (e.g. mutual understanding of progress and models for facilitation) become a regular part of classroom trainings, local government workshops, and corporate continuing education.
 - *“The facilitator was proactive in getting involved in the training, giving participants an opportunity to start speaking on their own”. (J, NPO employee, younger generation)*
- **Institutionalisation of Records and Sharing:** Through reports on youth activities supportive of the SDGs, networking events, and awards, records of practices (i.e. who, what, when, why, and how) are consulted for the design of the following year's processes. These records function as documents for budgetary requests and requests for collaboration.
 - *“We created a cycle of nurturing teachers. We give them training in advance and make them the main instructors of the actual event”. (E, local government employee)*

A key transformation is the shift from individual or ad-hoc efforts to proceduralised models, which lowers the barriers for new participants and facilitates system-wide adoption.

6.2 Establishing Culture: Inheritance of Stories, Customs, and Relationships

When systems establish rules, they become culture, which then changes daily behaviour. In Okayama, the following three points have become customary.

- **Establishing “Listen First, Connect, Record”:** Listening closely to, connecting with, and then sharing records have become basic procedures in meetings, classrooms, and local discussions.
 - *“Learning arises from accepting failure and thinking together”. (I, high school instructor)*
- **Generational Shifts in Leadership (Oversight > Partial Responsibility > Overall Management):** Young people gradually take over the process, and tacit knowledge is verbalised to become shared knowledge.
 - *“We discuss how young people can show off their strengths”. (J, NPO employee, younger generation)*
- **Sharing Stories and Reinterpretation:** Information, presentation, and online records serve as vessels for stories, and the implications of successes and failures can be carried forward to subsequent practices.
 - *“Everyone in the area began to think about the abbreviation ESD and policy. It’s being established locally”. (K, NPO employee)*

These points can be described as a way of creating a method that everyone wants to follow. It shows that systems and culture function as two sides of the same coin.

6.3 Spread and Scale: Connections within Areas, Transmission Between Areas, and Inheritance by the Next Generation

It is clear that established practices spread through the three routes – which, in turn, correspond to the categories of results or of the narrative throughlines – of inheritance, institutionalisation, and spread and evaluation

- **Connections within Areas (Horizontal Expansion):** The design, materials, and methods of these spaces are transferred to neighbouring organisations and expand to **joint training and collaborative events**. Sharing records avoids duplication and creates a learning cycle.
- **Transmission between Areas (Cross-Barrier Sharing):** Practices visualised through awards and informational meetings are circulated through scripts for progression, checklists, and formats for reflection in customisable units.
- **Inheritance by the Next Generation (the Scale of People):** Young people change roles from **learners to facilitators to planners to coordinators** and become a medium for disseminating ESD.
 - *“I realised that I needed a plan to keep things going, not just to do it all at once”. (G, junior high school instructor, younger generation)*

Spread does not encompass only the extent of the expansion; it also highlights that the key to sustainable expansion is to increase the number of independent spaces and connection maintenance.

Summary

- **Institutionalisation:** common language, design of discussions, and record sharing become proceduralised and open the door to new people.
- **Culturalisation:** listening, connecting, and recording become everyday practice, narratives are reinterpreted and become shared knowledge.
- **Spread:** the three design principles are shared within the area, redesigned between areas, and passed on to the next generation through role transition.

The final chapter discusses how these six categories form a cyclical structure, the value and challenges of the Okayama ESD Project, and implications for other areas.

Final Chapter: Summary and Looking Forward

This chapter outlines the results of the analysis of the Okayama ESD Project regarding the six categories of circulation. It also presents theoretical implications and practical suggestions based on the current findings.

7.1 Circulation Structure and Interactions of the Six Categories

According to the M-GTA analysis, the six categories were as follows: 1) Internalisation and Spread of Sustainability and ESD Ideals; 2) Diverse Experiences, Encounters, and Networks; 3) Autonomy, Self-Reflection, and Promoting Growth; 4) Collaboration, Community, and the Creation of Networks; 5) Taking Responsibility for Societal or Local Issues and Actions; 6) Inheritance, Institutionalisation, Spread, and Evaluation. These categories do not represent a simple linear sequence but function as a dynamic and recurring cycle, consistently interacting and feeding back into each other to support sustainable transformation.

Each chapter has dealt with these categories. Based on the stories and records, the author confirmed that in Okayama, **specific mechanisms** (i.e. ESD coordinator training, high school network practices exchange meetings, ESD Cafés, reports on youth activities in support of the SDGs, and awards) drove this cycle.

The power driving this cycle is **role transfer**. As young people gradually progress through the stages of **learning, communicating, and supporting**, the talent pool will grow, and the cycle will continue through intermediaries.

7.2 The Value and Challenges of the Okayama ESD Project

The value of the Okayama ESD Project can be noted in three main ways: 1) designs spaces that facilitate making changes in learning methods (discussion, collaboration, and reflection) part of everyday life; 2) includes a role transition process that encompasses young people; and 3) delivers planning for the upcoming year based on records and sharing. Regarding challenges, they encompass the following: 1) difficulties in understanding abstract concepts (i.e. the need for support for new learners); 2) designing methods for reflection and ethical judgement that do not fall into the trap of placing too much emphasis on technical skills; 3) establishing an evaluation framework (aspects of continued involvement, relational capital, and citizenship) that does not place too much emphasis on knowledge acquisition.

- *“It’s difficult to tell what will happen if we implement ESD”. (E, local government employee)*

This quote demonstrates that the abstract nature of ESD influences practitioners’ motivation and willingness to continue. In particular, local government officials must be able to show the results and ripple effects of these projects; this intangibility becomes a barrier to institutionalisation and evaluation. This coincides with the “institutionalisation, spread, evaluation” category identified in the M-GTA analysis, requiring the visualisation of practices and development of evaluation frameworks. It is also important to consider how to account for difficult-to-quantify outcomes (e.g. changing participant values, collaborative relationship quality improvement, fostering a culture of discussion in the local community). Internationally, various evaluation methods have been proposed for assessing the societal impact of ESD (e.g. transformational learning indicators, social learning frameworks, maturity of communities of practice). However, it remains difficult to assertively state whether these evaluation frameworks have been fully developed to suit the Japanese context. Nevertheless, quantitative indicators alone are insufficient for capturing local value transformation,

relationship quality, and role transitions that underpin the sustainability of ESD. This necessitates qualitative, narrative-based approaches and locally adapted frameworks.

Therefore, going forward, stakeholders should adopt evaluation methods that capture the positive changes of ESD for people and local communities in a qualitative, process-driven manner. The goal should go beyond simply visualising the results towards providing the foundation for communicating the value of ESD to society, and for utilising ESD in policy development and system design. The author plans to investigate this evaluation framework in further research.

7.3 Suggestions for Other Regions (Customisable Units)

The three design principles gleaned from experience in Okayama are as follows: 1) establishing a common language, 2) designing conversations that allow people to speak with confidence, and 3) recording small details and sharing them immediately. These are not as fixed recipes, but as flexible design principles to be locally adapted and reinterpreted, with an emphasis on reconstructing space, roles, and record-sharing according to each region's context. However, Okayama's practices have been supported by conditions such as its scale (i.e. a regionally significant city), the social education infrastructure (e.g. community centres), and comparatively deep regional relationships. As these conditions will differ from those in other regions, they should not be reproduced exactly as they are here. Rather, what is important is to consider the differences in conditions; the key is to reconstruct the process using the three design principles in ways that best fit local realities and resources, determining which elements to retain and which to change.

For example, in large metropolitan areas, it will likely be necessary to secure community gathering places rather than community centres, taking advantage of online platforms to design cross-border discussions. Conversely, in areas with weaker community ties, establishing a common language will be a prerequisite for discussion and collaboration.

The six-category cycle derived through the M-GTA analysis (ideals > encounters > reflections > collaboration > action > institutionalisation) refers to a learning process structure that is not dependent on the unique circumstances in Okayama. Still, applying this cycle to other regions will require reformatting the design of spaces, role transitions, and information sharing to better fit the local institutions, culture, and resources.

Conclusion: People Grow, Society Changes

What has been made clear from the analysis of the Okayama ESD Project is that the reciprocal process of restating the ideals of ESD using one's own words, collaborating with people who hold divergent perspectives, and reaching out to the local community has collectively changed the values and actions of those who participated in the project. It also resulted in new relationships in the local community. The cyclical process of internalising ESD ideals, collaborating across diverse perspectives, and engaging with local communities demonstrates that transformative education operates through recursive cycles of personal growth and societal change, rather than linear progression. This change coincides with the unified cultivation of ESD aims for 2030 (i.e. knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, and action) and are also the result of practices that have taken root throughout the entire city of Okayama through the RCE and Whole City Approach[1][10].

However, challenges have come to light. As demonstrated by one participant's statement, *"It's difficult to tell what will happen if we implement ESD"*, visualising outcomes is not always easy, hindering individuals from acquiring the necessary

accountability for incorporating these practices into institutions and their own decision-making. In an international sample, Jickling noted the danger of discourse that prioritises goals of “education for sustainable development” undermining educational freedom[2], while Wals expressed concerns regarding instrumentalism potentially favouring ESD towards guidance[3]. Further, Selby criticised the idea of treating nature and a local area as just a resource, arguing for the need for learning emphasising relationships and a sense of place[4]. These criticisms provide important perspectives for the continued scrutiny of the essence of ESD without excessively idealising the experience from Okayama.

Going forward, the system established in Okayama should not be presented as the “correct way” of doing things but as an exemplar of optimal design principles. Furthermore, these should be customised depending on each area’s institutions, culture, and resources. The issue of how to evaluate outcomes difficult to quantify (e.g. changes in values and collaborative relationship quality) and how to explain them to society must also be addressed. While methods for evaluating perspectives for transformative and social learning have been proposed internationally[3], they have not been fully tailored developed for the Japanese context. Developing these methods is the next important challenge for supporting ESD sustainability.

Difficult to quantify results, such as narrative quality changes, relationship flexibility, and the progression of role transitions from learners to communicators and supporters are both difficult to observe and evaluate. This is particularly so in today’s rapidly changing society and its emphasis on efficiency and immediacy. The Okayama ESD Project has presented these results as “stories” through straightforward methods that take advantage of detailed records and information sharing immediacy and use this knowledge to plan for the following year. This represents a reasonable balance that avoids making education too instrumental while satisfying public accountability[2][3].

The strength of the Okayama ESD Project lies in its ability to extract what has been learned from on-site practices and customise these learnings as people strive to implement them in daily life. Specifically, the ESD Coordinator training establishes a common language and methodology[5], the UNESCO Associated Schools High School Network Practice Exchange Meeting supports cross-barrier learning[6], and ESD Cafés provide a recurring opportunity for participants to speak confidently and listen to others[7]. Additionally, reports on youth activities in support of the SDGs, networking events, and ESD award ceremonies record and make visible ESD-related practices, creating a cycle leading to the next challenge[8]. These mechanisms uphold the cycle of learning, implementation, reflection, and redesign, while simultaneously driving personal growth and regional change.

As a result, the Okayama ESD Project, as a site for the intersection of ideals and practice, individuals and society, and experience and theory, embodies the essence of ESD: as people grow, society changes. These practices demonstrate that ESD is more than just a pedagogical method; it is an educational philosophy that can lead to societal change. Okayama’s track record proves that the acceleration of local action as called for by ESD for 2030, mutual learning through the RCE Network, and recognition of and sharing of the system developed in Okayama can support customisation in other areas[1][9][10].

[1] UNESCO. (2020). Education for Sustainable Development: A Roadmap <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374802.locale=en>

[2] Jickling, B. (1994). Why I Don’t Want My Children to Be Educated for Sustainable Development. *The Trumpeter*, 11(3), 114–116. <https://trumpeter.athabasca.ca/index.php/trumpet/article/download/325/498/>

[3] Wals, A. E. J. (2011). Learning Our Way to Sustainability. *Journal of Education for Sustainable Development*, 5(2), 177–186. <https://doi.org/10.1177/097340821100500208>

[4] Selby, D. (2017). Education for Sustainable Development, Nature and Vernacular Learning. *CEPS Journal*, 7(1), 9–27. <https://www.cepsj.si/index.php/cepsj/article/view/10>

(Appendix) Significance and Limitations of this Work

- **Significance:** A six-category model was presented in line with the specific **system** in Okayama, comprising a cycle of ESD foundation > action > reinterpretation. This clarifies the units of practical design that can be connected to the ESD for THE 2030 framework.
- **Limitations:** Due to the scope of the interviews (n=11) and surveys (n=14), care must be taken when **generalising** this work to other areas. In the future, researchers can seek to verify the stability of this cycle and the conditions for customisation through longitudinal studies and comparative case studies (of other RCEs and non-RCE areas). Utilising the RCE Network and UNESCO-related monitoring resources would be effective.

[5] Okayama City. (2025). *2025 Coordinator Training*. <https://www.city.okayama.jp/sdgs-esd/0000063246.html>

[6] Okayama University. (2024). *Okayama Prefecture UNESCO School High School Network Practice Exchange Meeting*. <https://edu.okayama-u.ac.jp/esd-topics/esd-topics-9321/>

[7] Okayama City. (2022). *Introduction to the ESD Cafe*. <https://www.city.okayama.jp/sdgs-esd/0000038230.html>

[8] ACCU. (2025). *ESD Okayama Award 2025 Call for Applicants*. <https://www.accu.or.jp/en/news/20250512/>

[9] United Nations University. (2025, January 16). *Global RCE Network*. <https://unu.edu/ias/global-rce-network>

[10] UNESCO. *Okayama: A city united for education for sustainable development*.

<https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/okayama-city-united-education-sustainable-development>

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Production Okayama ESD Promotion Commission (RCE Okayama)
SDGs & ESD Promotion Division, Okayama City

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Okayama City's SDGs & ESD Initiatives ►

