

Assessment of Capacity for Implementing Education for Sustainable Consumption: A comparative study of governmental capacity in China, Japan and the Republic of Korea

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Abstract

National and sub-national policy for Education for Sustainable Consumption (ESC) is one of the powerful instruments to influence sustainable consumption (SC) behaviour at both individual and organisational levels. This paper will address how to improve the capacity of policy makers and government officers in formulating ESC policy. It will also address the strategies governments can utilise to influence consumer behaviour.

Despite diverse policy dialogues and many numbers of initiatives on SCP, there is still a lack of knowledge and experience on how we actually can educate nations and their citizens for sustainable consumption. Therefore this paper will provide an assessment of current governmental strategies for promoting SC, address the current capacity for implementing effective ESC, and provide recommendations for improving ESC policy and implementation. The main research was conducted through review of current policy frameworks and strategic plans, assessment of training materials/curriculums, survey and interviews with relevant government officers in China, Japan and Republic of Korea.

The findings from this research identify key aspects of current governmental context for promoting SC and consumer awareness raising (including relevant policy frameworks, overall strategies, understandings of government officers, and barriers and obstacles to implementation). The analysis begins by identifying the current strengths and weaknesses in existing ESC knowledge held by relevant policy makers. The levers of change identified by UNDP for assessing capacity assets and needs: 1) institutional arrangements, 2) leadership, 3) knowledge, and 4) accountability are utilised to assess the capacity of governmental and institutional structures for ESC.

The outputs give consideration to opportunities for better policy integration between wider SCP policies and specific ESC initiatives. The recommendations aim at five main targets: 1) addressing roles and responsibilities for promoting SC; 2) utilising multiple policy mechanisms and inter-ministerial cooperation to promote ESC; 3) defining policy priorities and target areas for sustainable consumption; 4) improving accountability as a means to strengthen the overall system; and, 5) addressing ESC as a thematic approach.

Keywords: Education for Sustainable Consumption & Capacity Assessment

Introduction

Education for Sustainable Consumption (ESC) is a concept that has recently received a significant amount of attention as an important process for bolstering the transition towards a *low-carbon, sustainable society*. Education for Sustainable Consumption proves itself a poignant concept because of its ability to bridge and incorporate three of the major approaches for sustainability, specifically Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP), Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), and Sustainable (or responsible) Lifestyles.

ESC has gained recognition during international processes on both SCP and ESD, the UN's Marrakech Process and the UN's Decade of Education for Sustainable Development respectively, for its uniqueness to postulate and invigorate active methods and tools for citizens and consumers to participate in

and actively incorporate responsible and sustainable consumption into their daily lifestyles and habits. In this manner, Education for Sustainable Consumption can be understood as having a two-fold objective: the first objective aimed at influencing behaviour is to advance participation in sustainable consumption practices, and the second objective aimed at influencing knowledge and conceptualisation is to provide a tangible entry into the wider 'philosophy' of sustainable development. While SCP and ESD both attempt to address complex subjects, they are often aimed more at influencing knowledge and conceptualisation than at influencing behaviour, thus they can lack relevance to the average person's daily life. ESC, with its balance tilted more towards practical actions, serves as an appropriate entry point for many people to incorporate sustainable consumption practices into their daily lives and

thus to also gain experience of the underpinning principles of sustainable development.

UNEP's publication *Here and Now* (2010), prepared in cooperation with the Marrakech Task Force on Education for Sustainable Consumption provides important guidelines and recommendations for implementing and mainstreaming ESC into both formal and non-formal education processes. *Here and Now* outlines the following aspirations for ESC:

ESC is therefore about providing citizens with the appropriate information and knowledge on the environmental and social impacts of their daily choices, as well as workable solutions and alternatives. ESC integrates fundamental rights and freedoms including consumers' rights, and aims at empowering citizens for them to participate in the public debate and economy in an informed and ethical way (UNEP, 2010: 11).

The governments of China, Japan and Republic of Korea have all provided mandates to governmental agencies to take efforts to promote sustainable consumption. For instance, the newly formed Consumer Affairs Agency of the Japanese Cabinet Office has initiated inter-ministerial dialogues for better coordination of policy efforts on sustainable consumption and has established an ESC group in the Economic and Social Research Institute to provide support on effective consumer awareness raising. At the Eleventh Conference of the National Party of China in 2008, a new mandate was agreed upon for "the promotion of green consuming" to correlate with the *Circular Economy Promotion Law of the People's Republic of China* (effective 1 Jan 2009). The Korean "Presidential Committee on Green Growth" established a Green Lifestyle for Sustainable Development Team and coordinates national activities on Education for Green Growth including consumption practices.

The three East Asian countries have all developed many strong policies and approaches for advancing SCP in their respective countries. Earlier practices in these three countries, similar to the history in Europe, began first with the promotion of cleaner production as the mainstay of governments' approaches. Following on from this, efforts to also address aspects of consumption were initiated in the late 1980s to early '90s in all three countries, although becoming more advanced in the new millennium.

These first approaches towards sustainable consumption by the governments of East Asia can be understood as attempts to improve the overall infrastructure for sustainable consumption. It is really only since the new millennium that it is possible to identify policy approaches in East Asia that directly attempt to influence and change consumers' patterns of behaviour towards more responsible and sustainable consumption choices. There remains a current lack of understanding though of how to

promote and reward more positive patterns of behaviour through policy interventions, especially when compared with the strong history of regulating against negative environmental practices.

The promotion of sustainable consumption and green markets has received attention from many national governments including the East Asian countries of P. R. China, Japan and the Republic of Korea. All three countries have demonstrated interest and commitment towards shifting to more sustainable patterns of development and have also recognised the importance of sustainable consumption in achieving this. Evidence will be drawn from country case studies conducted in China, Japan and the Republic of Korea aimed at identifying the key aspects of the current governmental context for promoting sustainable consumption and consumer awareness raising (including relevant policy frameworks, overall strategies, understandings of government officers, and barriers and obstacles to implementation). This report provides an assessment of current governmental strategies for promoting sustainable consumption, addresses the current capacity for implementing effective ESC, and provides recommendations for improving ESC policy and implementation.

Methods

The research conducted for this report focused primarily on governmental capacity for effective ESC implementation at a national level, however it also included a small portion of research on sub-national level governance at municipal levels. The research aimed to identify relevant policies on SCP generally and ESC specifically and to provide an assessment of current governmental capacity for ESC implementation. The main goal of this research is to identify pathways for improving the overall performance of ESC implementation.

Primary research was conducted in China, Japan and Republic of Korea to investigate governmental capacity and strategies for promoting sustainable consumption and to identify opportunities for improving the implementation of ESC. The main methods for data collection were primary interviews, survey/questionnaires, analysis of government policy documents and reports, and from secondary literature review. The target respondents were three-fold: 60% focus on relevant officers from national governments (including Ministries of Environment, Education and Trade); 20% focus on relevant officers from one municipal or provincial government; and 20% focus on relevant NGOs and civil society organisations. The main research method was through face-to-face interviews with government officers guided by a structured interview schedule of mainly open-ended questions.

The three country case studies were subsequently utilised to conduct a capacity assessment of the current institutions and strategies for promoting SC

and implementing ESC in each country. This assessment is structured around the four levers of change identified in the capacity development framework utilised by the United Nations Development Program.

The United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) current strategy is focused on providing capacity development to strengthen the foundations for effective and continued development efforts. The methodology applied for the capacity assessment by UNDP includes three distinct dimensions of investigation: 1) points of entry (enabling environment, the organisational, and the individual), 2) core issues or levers of change, and 3) functional and technical capacity (UNDP, 2008: 2). The levers of change will provide the main framework for analysis in this work and are identified by UNDP as 1) institutional arrangements, 2) leadership, 3) knowledge, and 4) accountability (UNDP, 2010: 7-13).

Institutional Arrangements provide leverage points that are relevant across most aspects of public sector management, governance and development activities as it addresses the policies and procedures that are in place to functionalise political mandates and development objectives. Inefficiencies in institutional arrangements are often identified during capacity assessments due to the fact that optimal procedural structures in terms of efficiency and impact are often unacknowledged especially as new procedures and programmes are developed without incorporation or cohesion with previously existing arrangements. This is especially common when intra-ministerial and multi-agency work is examined (UNDP, 2008: 11).

Leadership as a lever of change has different natures depending on if addressing individual or organisational levels. Effective leadership as an organisational capacity helps to advance a vision-driven agenda and strategic planning. Capacities for leadership can be enhanced by strengthening organisational abilities in vision setting, systems thinking, risk assessment and management and through establishing collective management systems that encourage active and experiential learning (UNDP, 2008: 12 and UNDP, 2010: 9).

"Knowledge is the foundation of capacity" (UNDP, 2010: 10). At an organisational level, knowledge development is about improving expertise and organisational learning strategies. Knowledge capacity can be strengthened through professional training, experience sharing and knowledge management systems in the organisations. At a social level, knowledge capacity is often best addressed through reforming formal education systems to ensure that younger generations will have the skills and know-how to deal with current and emerging challenges. The link between social and organisational levels can be developed through ensuring that higher education is corresponding to desired skills and technical competencies desired by

the professional sector (UNDP, 2008: 12 and UNDP, 2010: 10).

Accountability is an important lever of change within the organisational sector as it provides oversight, monitoring and evaluation to ensure that procedures and programmes are achieving their desired objectives and to identify obstacles. Furthermore, systems can also be established to provide for public accountability and transparency to ensure that governments are reaching the needs of their citizens. Accountability capacities can be improved through strengthening mechanisms for individuals to voice opinions (especially through civic literacy and education programmes), open access to information, ensuring robust monitoring and evaluation systems including both internal and external/independent systems, and by active integration of learning from M&E into future endeavours (UNDP, 2008: 12 and UNDP, 2010: 11).

Results and Discussion

ESC STRATEGIES IN CHINA¹

The national government of China identified four main themes they intend to address in their efforts on SCP: 1) Energy Saving and Emissions Reduction, 2) Conservation-oriented Society, 3) Low Carbon society, and 4) Tax Preference. The Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP) in China is one of the leading government agencies to place high priority on promoting sustainable consumption through advocating green lifestyles in both formal and non-formal education – starting policy efforts in this area in 2004. Although many policy efforts have aimed at sustainable production and promoting green markets in China, the number of policies specifically related to sustainable consumption is limited. Only four national governmental agencies were identified as enacting specific policies for promoting consumer awareness and ESC. These agencies are MEP, the National Development and Reform Commission, the China Consumer Association, and the State Forestry Administration.

ESC STRATEGIES IN JAPAN²

The national government of Japan has set in place several strong policies for institutionalising several sustainable consumption practices including the *Fundamental Law for Establishing a Sound Material-Cycle Society* (2000), the *Green Purchasing Law* (2000) and the *Green Contract Law* (2007). These

¹ Chinese country case study conducted by Dr. Qing TIAN of the Environmental Education Centre at Beijing Normal Education.

² Japanese country case study conducted by Dr. Masahisa SATO and Prof. Hideki NAKAHARA of the Faculty of Environmental & Information Studies at Tokyo City University.

policies have aimed at developing infrastructures for sustainable consumption and transitioning the practices of public bodies to provide leadership and model best practice in sustainable consumption. In 2010, the newly formed Consumer Affairs Agency initiated an inter-agency council on SCP to identify opportunities for better coordination of SCP strategies and policies across ministries.

In formal education, ESC is addressed in terms of consumer education based on protecting the individual's rights and preventing harm. This approach does not address prevailing socio-cultural factors of consumption, nor does it connect with aspects of ESD taught as environmental education in the natural sciences. The Japanese government enjoys strong cooperation with civil society organisations to promote and encourage participation in various campaigns for SCP. Although these efforts have led to a very high literacy on issues such as energy efficiency and 3R's for a sound material cycle, these practices – much like the government's approach to SCP policies – remains compartmentalised and disjunctured.

ESC STRATEGIES IN REPUBLIC OF KOREA³

The national government of the Republic of Korea enacted a *Five-Year Plan for Green Growth* in 2009. This plan sets out the main framework under which SCP and ESC are currently addressed in the country. During the 1990s and 2000s, the government launched several acts addressing energy efficiency, resource savings, recycling, green procurement and environmental education. There have been several initiatives and campaigns corresponding with these acts to disseminate good practices to the public. However, the shift towards green growth has led to a decrease in prioritisation and understanding by the government on both sustainable development and sustainable consumption.

The lack of a clear vision for the government's approach to sustainable consumption and ESC under the *Plan for Green Growth* has resulted in limited coordination of policy efforts between ministries and also limited defining of the roles of various ministries in promoting sustainable consumption. This includes a severe shortage of human resources dedicated to efforts on ESC. The government's approach to ESC is further challenged by a lack of multi-stakeholder dialogue and cooperation in this area.

ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT CAPACITY FOR IMPLEMENTING ESC IN NE ASIA

A comparative analysis was conducted as an assessment of the current governmental capacities for implementing effective education for sustainable consumption in China, Japan, and the Republic of

Korea and utilised the leavers of change from UNDP's capacity assessment framework. A ranking scale was prepared as follows: 0 = no identified examples; 1 = existing examples, but not mainstreamed across system; 2 = existing examples and identifiable achievements/impacts, and; 3 = mainstreamed across system and high achievements/impacts. Though the ranking provides a comparable, quantified score, the issuance of such score is based on a qualitative assessment of the available information at hand.

Institutional Arrangements

Under the lever of institutional arrangements both China and Japan scored a 5 and Korea scored a 4 out of a potential score of 12. It is noteworthy that Japan due to the recent initiation of an inter-agency council for SCP has made improvements in its capacity and is expected to make more as achievements and impacts of these new examples become apparent. On the other hand, Korea's institutional arrangements have actually decreased in the past three years since the institutionalisation of the country's Green Growth strategy. The Green Growth strategy brings significant scoring for a clearly formulated vision under the leadership lever, but in terms of this lever both roles and responsibilities have been left unclear since the initiation of the new strategy and the process has lost some streamlining as many of the previous institutional arrangements that existed as part of the country's Presidential Committee on Sustainable Development were removed and abandoned when it was replaced with the Presidential Committee on Green Growth.

It could be argued that all three governments have streamlined processes for SCP and promoting green markets, but this is not the case for ESC. Although, China's efforts in greening formal education institutions and Japan's efforts in regards to reducing household energy consumption both demonstrate very successful procedures. Korea has improved coordination under its vision for green growth, but improvements in the areas of management and communication need to be made for processes to become organised and roles defined.

The lack of defined roles/responsibilities and a coordination mechanism are the institutional areas that have hindered the progress to-date in all three countries. Part of the reason for this is the inter-ministerial nature of where ESC fits into existing mandates on sustainable development, ESD and SCP. Because many of these mandates exist in various ministries within each of these countries, it is very difficult to define the roles on ESC as they apply to activities in multiple policy areas and multiple ministries. The improvement of coordination mechanisms not just for ESC, but rather for framing and mapping the wider sustainable development agendas and activities, could greatly help to identify those areas where educational activities are need and also where they can be coupled with other policy

³ Korean country case study conducted by Dr. So-Young LEE and Dr. Jung Hwa KANG of the Consumers Union of Korea.

instruments including economic incentives, regulations, information provision and cooperative agreements to increase dissemination of the concepts, policies and desired learning outcomes.

Leadership

Under the lever of leadership Japan scored a 7, China scored a 6 and Korea scored a 5 out of a total potential score of 12. However, it was Korea that scored the highest for the subcomponent of a clearly formulated vision, and China that scored the highest for having good communication standards. While Japan has not achieved full points in any single subcomponent, it showed the most balanced capacity assessment for this lever and is the only case to have existing examples for all four sub-components.

China has a noteworthy strength in researching and piloting projects on ESC, developing specific communication standards, and sharing these tools and mechanisms for wider implementation. Thus, many of China's projects are modelled on replicating good practice blue-prints. This approach means that the Chinese government does implement broad practical-oriented programs, but it is also faced with the challenge of reaching a real depth and character with these projects since they do not always correspond to a clearly defined vision.

The Republic of Korea, on the other hand, now has a clearly formulated vision in their *Plan for Green Growth*, but due to the lack of well-established communication standards and outreach mechanisms this vision has yet to substantially influence policy approaches. Furthermore, there remains a lack of clear understanding of this agenda. Capacity building efforts to strengthen the other subcomponents of this lever could better support the dissemination of the green growth vision and ensure its proper management.

Japan has been limited in this area due to the lack of inter-agency communication to manage responsibilities towards wider objectives, to coordinate cross-ministerial cooperation, and to share experiences and lessons learned. In fact, Japan's ministries are often more likely to share knowledge internationally with parallel ministries in other countries than they are to share with other ministries domestically. This communication barrier and lack of knowledge sharing tools will hopefully be something that the efforts of the Inter-Agency Council on SCP will alleviate, but currently it remains a hindrance to successful ESC implementation in Japan. One of the objectives for the Inter-Agency Council could be to promote better cross-ministerial coordination, communication and knowledge sharing as this could substantially help to improve policy linkages and synergies across the sustainable consumption and sustainable development activities of multiple ministries.

Knowledge

The total possible score for the knowledge lever was 9. For this lever, Japan scored a 5, China a 4, and Korea a 3. None of the countries had achieved the mainstreaming of any of the sub-components of this lever. Korea has the potential of improving significantly under the knowledge lever over the next few years as it was clear that the country has initiated several new projects and agencies for knowledge generation and dissemination on green growth, but as of yet it was not possible to identify clear impacts from these new initiatives. Japan is strong in many aspects of the knowledge lever and has several good approaches to link supply and demand for knowledge development. As the different Japanese ministries have their own subsidiary research institutes, in general the research supply and demand linkage is fully mainstreamed in the country but since ESC is challenged by a lack of inter-ministerial coordination it has made it harder for this system to appropriately address ESC research needs. China, as mentioned before, does very good work on piloting innovative projects and disseminating blue-print models, and in this way they do create a good knowledge supply and demand systems aimed at establishing practical interventions. This approach has both its benefits and disadvantages though; as a drawback, this approach does not create very good knowledge retention nor does it develop a progressive knowledge generation strategy.

Addressing knowledge sharing tools, it is important to distinguish two aspects. The first form of knowledge sharing is to ensure that the best information and research is being input to the decision and policy making processes. This is actually the area where all three countries are stronger. The second form of knowledge sharing is the provision of essential information to the public on sustainable consumption practices and lifestyle/behavioural responses for a low-carbon, sustainable society. To one extent this does occur, but only at the simplest level in terms of promoting a single sustainable consumption choice or promoting an energy efficient product over another less efficient one. At a more complex level of providing knowledge and tools for people to understand how lifestyle patterns can be adapted to accommodate new changes to support more sustainable societies, this is not really generated or promoted by any of the countries.

Accountability

The accountability lever is an area in which all three countries have very limited capacity. Out of a possible score of 9, Korea and Japan both scored 2 and China scored 1. Japan and Korea both have identifiable examples of participatory planning and stakeholder feedback mechanisms. While only China had identifiable examples of audit systems and practice standards. However, in all cases for this lever even where identifiable examples existed, it was not

possible to locate identifiable impacts from the existing activities.

This core lever is a complex capacity area as it includes a system's built in mechanisms for auditing, monitoring and evaluating; along with also including aspects of multi-stakeholder participation in decision and policy making processes. The first part of the lever, monitoring and evaluation, is not just about ensuring that what is suppose to happen is occurring properly; it is also about creating an institutional learning system that allows an organisation to improve practices through subsequent rounds of activity, to appropriately deal with potential constraints/weaknesses, and to incorporate best practices into future strategies.

Overall Capacity Assessment of the Levers of Change

The overall review of the capacity assessment of the levers of change is now possible since the full assessment of all sub-components has been completed. The total potential score for all four core issues was 42. Japan scored the highest with a 19 thus achieving a 45.24% capacity rating. China achieved 38.1% capacity rating with a score of 16. Korea's total score was 14 and achieved a capacity rating of 33.33%.

It is also possible to look at the general capacity levels per each lever of change. The average capacity rating in regards to institutional arrangements was 38.9% across the three country cases. Leadership had the highest average capacity rating at 50%. For the knowledge lever, a 44.4% average capacity rating was achieved. The accountability lever was substantially weaker than the other three levers across all country cases and only achieved an average capacity rating of 18.5%.

Several important points are noticeable from this general comparison of the capacity assessment scores for the three countries. First, there is very little deviation between the three countries capacity scores; under each core issue scores only deviate by a one point maximum from the median score (the average deviation from the mean score would be slightly less than one). Second, only in three places were capacity scores greater than 50% of the potential score for the each lever (Japan scored 7 of 12 and China 6 of 12 for

leadership, and Japan scored 5 of 9 for knowledge), thus in all cases there is still substantial opportunity for capacity building across all levers. Third, it is possible to compare the countries' capacity ratings to the ranking scale as follows: achieving a score of 1 (existing examples, but not mainstreamed across system) for all sub-components would result in a 33.33% rating, a score of 2 (existing examples and identifiable achievements/impacts) would result in a 66.67% rating, and a 3 (mainstreamed across system and high achievements/impacts) for all subcomponents would be 100%. So with this in mind, we see that all cases generally had identifiable examples of the various capacity aspects (an average score of 1) but that these examples were not yet leading to identifiable achievements and impacts (an average score of 2). Of course this over simplifies the assessment findings, and it is actually found that in reality often one sub-component has been well developed but the overall lever scores low because it is hindered by the undeveloped aspects of other sub-components.

This comparison highlights the levers of accountability and institutional arrangements as the two levers generally needing greater capacity building. It is also possible to link these two levers by considering accountability capacities as providing direct inputs to the institutional arrangements by 1) helping to formulate relevant visions and plans through multi-stakeholder participation which in turns strengthens the coordination mechanism, 2) encouraging a greater defining of roles and responsibilities across a diverse set of stakeholders, 3) setting clear achievement targets that support merit-based appraisal, and 4) ensuring systems learning and progressive streamlining of processes through an effective monitoring and evaluation system. Of course, capacity building is needed across all core issues, however through this highlighted approach of utilising participatory planning mechanisms and auditing systems as front-end inputs and outcome feedback cycling respectively, the strengthening of the accountability lever can directly support stronger capacities under institutional arrangements.

Table 1 Total Scores for Capacity Assessment of the Levers of Change

	Institutional Arrangement	Leadership	Knowledge	Accountability	Total Score for Capacity Assessment	Total Capacity Rating ¹
China	5	6	4	1	16	38.1%
Japan	5	7	5	2	19	45.24%
Korea	4	5	3	2	14	33.33%
Total Potential Score	12	12	9	9	42	100%

Notes

¹ Calculated as a percentage of the achieved score divided by the total possible score of 42.

Conclusion

Strengthening the governmental capacities for implementing effective ESC is a complex subject that must take into consideration the diversity of potential capacity building that is feasible for governments to undertake. It must also consider the variety of capacities that support implementation including those outlined under the four levers of change: institutional arrangements, leadership, knowledge and accountability. Having provided an assessment of the current capacities for ESC implementation in P. R. China, Japan and Republic of Korea, this section now aims to detail several practical steps that these governments can initiate to achieve not only better ESC implementation but to generally strengthen their capacities for long-term effective implementation. Five recommendations are provided in total, including:

- 1) Roles and Responsibilities in promoting Sustainable Consumption;
- 2) Applying Multiple Policy Mechanisms and Inter-Ministerial/Inter-Agency approaches;
- 3) Define Policy Priorities and Target Areas for Sustainable Consumption;
- 4) Addressing ESC as a thematic approach to ESD and SCP;
- 5) Improving Accountability as a means to strengthen the overall system, and;

Roles and Responsibilities in promoting Sustainable Consumption

When we consider the highlighted actors and the proposed ideal roles that they are expected to play, it is striking how much responsibility is placed on governments – especially at the national level and in relevant agencies – for driving the major shifts in society's patterns of consumption and production. It is the role of government to coordinate the cooperation and participation of multi-stakeholders, but in doing so it may be important to consider how these roles and responsibilities can be better shared across the multiplicity of actors.

There are numerous actors who can contribute to the effective implementation of ESC, and in most cases rather than competing with one another these actors' various expertises help to strengthen the overall impact of these initiatives. For example, the first Green Purchasing Network was initiated in Japan (GPN-J) from the recommendation of the country's Ministry of Environment (MOEJ), and now all three countries have similar networks. Though GPN-J was initially promoted by MOEJ and maintains close links, it fully functions as a non-governmental, membership organisation that includes an extensive network of partners from businesses, local governments, consumer groups, and environmental NGOs. The high impact of this type of network has been the main reason for its extensive replication throughout both Northeast and Southeast Asia. This type of multi-stakeholder network has the potential to

create a powerful cooperative dynamic where major progress is not the burden of just one actor. Rather it can be the result of a snow-ball effect consisting of incremental improvements occurring from different sectors on a regular basis.

Increased public participation in vision forming for a sustainable society supports greater public ownership and buy-in to this process. Facilitating this participation at the local level through various community groups also creates a further powerful actor that can take on responsibility for implementing ESC. The structures of multi-level governance are also important to consider for effective policy formation and implementation of ESC. The relationship between national governments and local governments needs to be developed in regards to the promotion of sustainable consumption. As some of the local examples from the three country case studies demonstrate, local governments can initiate very effective ESC projects as they are better situated to respond to local contexts and citizens' needs. Local governments can also form partnerships with NGOs and civil society groups to strengthen the practical implementation of many projects.

Applying Multiple Policy Mechanisms and Inter-Ministerial/Inter-Agency approaches

The government has many available policy tools and mechanisms it can use to promote sustainable consumption. Utilising a diversity of approaches helps to strengthen the overall effect. A report by the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) and partners details a set of five policy instruments to support sustainable consumption and production. These instruments are: 1) regulatory, 2) economic, 3) educational, 4) cooperative, and 5) informational (adapted from Tyson, ed. 2006). In order to successfully implement a variety of policy tools and approaches for ESC, it will be necessary to allow each government agency to play their most effective role and to achieve policy integration through inter-ministry/inter-agency coordination.

The U.K. government outlined a strong policy strategy in *Securing the Future* (2005) based on five main objectives:

- 1) *Enable*, action should be taken to remove barriers to sustainable consumption and to develop a supportive infrastructure.
- 2) *Encourage*, focuses on rewarding good behaviour, penalising bad behaviour, and enforcing minimum standards of practice.
- 3) *Engage*, the main objective is to involve the public and to stimulate local, community action.
- 4) *Exemplify*, the government should lead by example by developing and implementing good practice and also through achieving a consistency in their policy frameworks.
- 5) *Catalyse* builds on the achievements of the other four steps, and once a critical engagement is achieved efforts should be

made to stimulate major shifts in social and cultural habits (adapted from HM Government 2005, 24-41).

These five objectives provide a clear strategy for a holistic and integrative approach to promote sustainable consumption by addressing the physical infrastructures for sustainable consumption, encouraging individual practice, influencing socio-cultural values and traditions that frame current lifestyles, and improving political systems and frameworks. In this manner, a coordinated process can be visualised where the relevant ministries take efforts in areas of industry and infrastructure to ensure that greener consumption options are readily available. Coinciding with this process, economic and finance ministries can establish systems for rewarding consumers who take substantial efforts towards sustainable consumption, while environmental and educational ministries can work with engaging the public to promote and encourage these new initiatives. Finally, as a whole the government should work to mainstream these practices across public agencies and also to encourage wider participation of multi-stakeholders which can be done through the respective coordination agencies each government already has.

Define Policy Priorities and Target Areas for Sustainable Consumption

Confusion over what *more-sustainable* consumption means continues to hinder effective policy formation. Generic definitions of sustainable consumption are understood by government officials, however clear principles for sustainable consumption and primary target areas for policy formation are much less apparent. Governments must work to clearly define what they intend to achieve in promoting sustainable consumption: i.e., is this just a mere lessening of overall consumption (quantitative issue), or is it a change to greener forms of consumption (qualitative issue)? Also, identification of target consumption areas that currently have significant environmental impacts would distinguish clear issues and relevant actions that individuals and household could take towards achieving sustainable consumption.

The vision for a sustainable society, or even just sustainable consumption, must also be framed in a manner that promotes it as achieving something “better”. It is of course the case that consuming sustainably will mean consuming less of or giving up certain items and also in general consuming less of overall amount of material goods. However, it is fully possible to decrease consumption of products and then apply that excess capital to the consumption and valuing of human services, and in this way it is possible to envision a sustainable change in consumption patterns that could also increase the opportunity for well-paid and dignified livelihoods. The point here is that sustainable consumption can be aligned with another important social objective of

improving overall quality of life along with improving the health of the environment we live in.

Government officials understand that sustainable consumption should reduce the environmental impacts of modern consumption patterns through energy efficiency and resource savings, but there is no substantive identification of behaviours that need to be influenced to encourage this transition. Clear identification of the important values for consumers’ proactive participation in sustainable consumption would provide a better understanding of the types of socio-cultural transition ESC tries to promote, such as the values for environmental citizenship identified in Choi and Didham (2009):

- 1) *Pro-environmental values* – a personal belief that protecting the environment is important;
- 2) *Individual Empowerment* – that each person can be a powerful agent of change;
- 3) *Responsibility* – a sense of environmental citizenship and duty;
- 4) *Simple actions* – recognition that little steps can lead to big impacts;
- 5) *Future Vision* – an inspired view of achieving a sustainable society (2009: 45).

Furthermore, there is also no substantive public discussion of what are the types of sustainable lifestyles that their society hopes to achieve. Public participation in forming national visions such as a “2030 Vision for a Sustainable Consumption Society” would greatly increase the sense of public ownership and responsibility for achieving this vision.

Improving Accountability as a means to strengthen the overall system

Methods for building accountability capacities are based on three main project phases: as inputs to the planning phase, as throughputs of the implementation phase, and by conducting a review process based on the outputs and results of the given initiative.

Participatory Planning Mechanisms

The addition of a participatory planning mechanism is a noted way to substantially increase capacity as it directly improves the accountability lever and indirectly adds strength to the institutional arrangements and leadership levers. Some of the more robust techniques for participatory planning have been aimed at local-level planning and also come from development practitioners working in the field from which very important benefits have been observed as a result of effective participatory processes. These benefits can be understood from the perspective of experiential learning theory (see Kolb and Fry, 1975 and Kolb, 1984) in that the participatory planning provides a social process that helps to align people with the goals and values of sustainable development through direct examination of the type of future that is desired and the concepts that frame social progress.

Acknowledging the important social learning benefits that participatory planning can engender, there is a high-level of justification for including this

process into the vision forming for sustainable development and SCP policies. Prior to initiating a participatory process, it necessary to ensure that the appropriate people are engaged, thus it is ideal to conduct a stakeholder analysis and also establish means for wider citizen engagement. The participatory process itself can be broken down into three stages: 1) Assessing the Current Situation, 2) Creating Vision, and 3) Defining Development Goals and Priorities. The overall objective of these three stages is to establish a collective understanding of what is desired to be achieved under a given vision or plan.

Work Plan and Performance Targets

In order to achieve strong accountability across project implementation it is important that the required activities are detailed in an easily implementable manner. There are two specific products that support this: 1) a work plan that details the actions to be taken, the time frame over which they are to occur, the main actors responsible for implementation, and the resources to be made available, and; 2) a set of target achievements and performance standards that provide guidance for project implementation and that allows for a quick assessment to see if things are occurring in a timely and efficient manner. When these two products are well prepared, not only do they increase accountability capacities but they also add to strengthening project management.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The important benefit of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) processes is the establishment of continuous learning cycles that initiate action-reflection project cycles. To effectively establish this requires that the M&E process appropriately responds to the earlier two accountability phases by utilising the vision, goals and priorities, and performance criteria as the basis for establishing indicators in the monitoring and evaluation phase. The goal of M&E is to assure that development activities are being implemented to plan and that these projects are resulting in the types of positive changes that are desired. Furthermore, a good M&E system will identify potential threats or constraints before they are causing serious negative impacts. Thus, M&E can be utilised both as a system of checks and balances and also as a learning tool to identify the important strengths and weaknesses of a given project.

The M&E process must account for the holistic nature of various sustainable development projects which can be challenging when society is accustomed to measuring progress based on only a minimal number of growth oriented indicators. Establishing sustainability indicators has become the preferred way to assess development projects and numerous attempts have also been made to establish a set of ESD indicators. The indicator sets are usually created to respond to a specific vision or project agenda, and in this way they are highly relevant to this one

initiative. However this type of indicator set often means that it is not replicable to other initiatives, and each initiative must go through the process of establishing its own indicator set.

Addressing ESC as a thematic approach to ESD and SCP

Education for Sustainable Consumption can aid in synergising different aspects of the overall sustainable development agenda, especially SCP, ESD and sustainable lifestyles. The key activity here is to clearly highlight and support opportunities for individuals to actively practice sustainable consumption and to structure these experiences as unique forms of action learning for understanding the wider principles of sustainable development and SCP. ESC aims at providing a process of active and communicative learning that challenges traditional patterns of behaviour through a process of integrating science and values into a socially responsible worldview that places the student or consumer at the center of a dynamic system rather than as an outside observer of a stable system.

ESC provides a model for reversing the traditional abstract learning models by building from the idea of self-aware learners who are able to draw direct connections to the interrelationship between their own actions and the quality of the world around them. Ideally this process should engender the abilities for critical reflection and action learning that allows the students to apply their learning to their own behaviours in an empathetic manner. In its relationship to ESD and SCP, ESC is important for its ability to provide a personal perspective and relevance to the individual's daily life. While ESD (and also to lesser SCP) often take the approach of learning first and action second, ESC is able to reverse this process by starting first with action then moving on to deeper learning concepts that include the more complex principles and values that frame sustainable consumption and sustainable development.

When we review the main drivers of sustainability, it is the consumption driver that the majority of people can take the most significant personal action on. Thus, if the goal is not just to achieve citizen acceptance for the idea of sustainable development but also to achieve their commitment in making this transition then sustainable consumption is the appropriate starting point.

Closing Remarks

Throughout this work, ESC has been promoted not just as another add-on topic to include in classroom education, but rather as an integral process for strengthening SCP and ESD systems by bringing meaning and relevance to the lives of ordinary citizens. It is with this understanding that the capacity building recommendations suggested above have been developed, and this is also the hope for the direction in which the governments of these three countries will proceed and establish greater policy mandates for the inclusion of ESC. Educating citizens about their roles

and responsibilities in helping achieve a low carbon, sustainable society is at the essence of what we understand as ESC. Of course, ESC provides many important learning opportunities when integrated into the formal education curriculum, but it also has potential that goes well beyond that single focus. ESC can be understood as a form of citizenship education, and at its core it is about *encouraging active participation*. This active participation can be in many areas: participation in forming the vision for a future sustainable society, in transforming consumption patterns, in supporting greener markets, and in strengthening communities to be the core social unit at which the networks and relationship for responsible living are built.

The objective of this work is to provide direct and practical means for improving governments' ability for effecting change at the level of socio-cultural values and more specifically at the level of individual behaviour and consumption choices. The purpose of ESC is not to tell people how they should behave, but rather to provide the learning methods and communicative opportunities to address the relationship between their own actions and the state of the world around them in a conscientious manner. Furthermore, it is about engaging people at a collective level to decide what type of future they would like to achieve not only for themselves, but for their children and grandchildren, and in doing so opening consideration to what are their own roles and responsibilities in achieving this desired future. Finally, ESC is about enlightening people about the choices they make in their daily lives in order to understand the impacts of those choices and to provide them with the ability to select their own choices in a way that is congruent with the future they would like to achieve.

The recommendations for strengthening governmental capacity for ESC implementation aim at improving the meta-level structures for generally producing effective ESC initiatives and ensuring positive impacts rather than focusing on the micro-level activities and specific initiatives that can be part of strengthening the topical and subject basis of ESC implementation. Prior to increasing the quantity of topics covered by ESC, it is first necessary to strengthen the quality of how ESC initiatives are implemented. Adding new topics and initiatives to the ESC frameworks of course helps to improve its overall implementation. However, acknowledging the potentials for capacity building available to each government which would improve the overall quality of the framework for ESC implementation, it is argued that the capacity building recommendations suggested in this paper will lead to a greater long-term improvement of ESC and additionally provide benefits for wider policies on sustainable development including SCP and ESD. These system level improvements are thus viewed as part of the

larger attempt to initiate the wider institutional transformations needed to support the socio-cultural changes towards achieving a low carbon, sustainable society.

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