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The Role of Governments in Education for Sustainable Consumption

Capacity for the Effective Implementation in Asia-Pacific Region

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Strategic Policy Research to Support a Sustainable Asia-Pacific

Research Overview

- **Research Question:** How can/do national governments support promotion of sustainable consumption, especially through education for sustainable consumption (ESC) and citizen engagement in sustainable consumption practices.
- **Research aim:** To provide an assessment of current governmental capacity for ESC implementation.
- **Objectives:** 1) identify existing policy frameworks/strategies for sustainable consumption and ESC, 2) identify existing strategies and mechanisms for ESC implementation, 3) analyse lessons learnt from good practices in ESC implementation, and 4) assess the current situation and governmental capacity for ESC implementation.
- **Main goal:** To identify pathways to strengthen and advance government roles in effectively promoting sustainable consumption and to improve the overall performance of ESC implementation through capacity building measures.



Research Approach

Research Approach: Country case studies of governmental approaches to ESC in six countries from East and Southeast Asia.

Case Study Method: Based on open-ended interviews (with structured interview schedule) with government officers, practitioners, and civil society in each country. Per country, approximately 25 interviews were conducted (with general divide of 60% for national government, 20% one local government, and 20% civil society). Country case studies were additionally supported by analysis of relevant policy documents and collection of good practice examples.

- Primary research in China, Japan and Republic of Korea in 2010-11.
- Primary research in Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand in 2013-14.

Analysis: comparative capacity assessment of the current institutions and strategies for promoting SC and implementing ESC.

Theoretical/Conceptual – There is a contested understanding of effective approaches to promoting sustainable consumption and pro-environmental behaviours; which has resulted in acknowledgement of the “Value-Action Gap”.

Contextual – Policies and practice on ESC in the countries covered in this study are relatively recent and rather fragmented, thus it is hard to establish a systematic review of ESC itself. There is also notable competition among various sustainability themes.

Pragmatic – A study of ESC inputs does not provide an easy correlation to ESC impacts and outcomes, especially due to the lack of a model to measure systematic behaviour change towards sustainable consumption.



Regional Context

“There are now more than 1.7 billion members of ‘the consumer class’ today – nearly half of them in the ‘developing’ world. A lifestyle and culture that became common in Europe, North America, Japan, and a few other pockets of the world in the twentieth century is going global in the twenty-first”

(Starke ed. 2004, 4).

Population → ~4 Billion, 60% of the world total

Child (0-14) and Youth (15-24) Population → over 1.5 billion

Fastest Regional Economic Growth (over past 40 years) →
average GDP per capita growth rate of 3.31%
compared to a global average of just 1.93%

Largest regional Consumer Class → almost 500 million people,
29% of the world total

Global Private Consumption → contributes 21.4% of world total

Massive discrepancies in Purchasing Power → only 27% of region’s
population are part of the consumer class

Living on less than \$1.25 per day → over one quarter of the region’s
population in extreme poverty

- **China:** Many policy efforts on sustainable production and green markets in China, but few related to sustainable consumption. Four main themes on SCP: 1) Energy Saving and Emissions Reduction, 2) Conservation-oriented Society, 3) Low Carbon society, and 4) Tax Preference.
- **Japan:** Strong policies aimed at developing infrastructures for SC and for public bodies to model best practice in SC: *Fundamental Law for Establishing a Sound Material-Cycle Society* (2000), the *Green Purchasing Law* (2000) and the *Green Contract Law* (2007).
- **Korea:** The *Five-Year Plan for Green Growth enacted* in 2009 set out the main framework under which SCP and ESC are addressed and led to a decrease in prioritisation and understanding by the government on both sustainable development and sustainable consumption.

- **Malaysia:** Driven by progressive environmental policy, strong emphasis is now placed on low-carbon and green economy paths. Higher education plays a key role in advancing both ESD and ESC.
- **Philippines:** The strong history of Agenda 21 has provided a good system for implementation flow between national and local levels. The basis for addressing both ESD and ESC remains the National EE Action Plan
- **Thailand:** Overall vision built on Sufficiency Economy Philosophy. Thailand is the only country where ESC (and Sufficiency Living) are included in the national curriculum with identified learning standards and indicators.

Analysis Results

Levers of Change: Capacity Development Core Issues & Responses			
INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS	LEADERSHIP	KNOWLEDGE	ACCOUNTABILITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streamlined processes • Clear definition of roles and responsibilities • Merit-based appraisal mechanism • Coordination mechanism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly formulated vision • Communication standards • Management tools • Outreach mechanism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research supply and demand linkage mechanism • Brain gain and retention strategies • Knowledge sharing tools and mechanism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit systems and practice standards • Participatory planning mechanism • Stakeholder feedback mechanism

Source: UNDP. (2010) *Supporting Capacity Development: The UNDP Approach*. New York: UNDP.

Institutional Arrangements

Components of Institutional Arrangements	China	Japan	Korea	Malaysia	Philippines	Thailand
Streamlined processes ⁽²⁾	2	2	1	2	1	2
Clear definition of roles and responsibilities	0	1	0	1	1	2
Merit-based appraisal mechanism	2	1	1	1	2	2
Coordination mechanism	1	1	2	1	2	0
Total Score for Institutional Arrangements	5	5	4	5	6	6

Scale: 0 – no identified examples; 1 – existing examples, but not mainstreamed across system;
 2 – existing examples and identifiable achievements/impacts; 3 – mainstreamed across system and high achievements/impacts.

Leadership

Components of Leadership	China	Japan	Korea	Malaysia	Philippines	Thailand
Clearly formulated vision	1	2	3	3	3	3
Communication standards	3	1	0	0	2	1
Management tools	0	2	1	3	2	2
Outreach mechanism	2	2	1	1	2	1
Total Score for Leadership	6	7	5	7	9	7

Scale: 0 – no identified examples; 1 – existing examples, but not mainstreamed across system;
 2 – existing examples and identifiable achievements/impacts; 3 – mainstreamed across system and high achievements/impacts.

Knowledge

Components of Knowledge	China	Japan	Korea	Malaysia	Philippines	Thailand
Research Supply & Demand Linkage Mechanism	2	2	1	3	2	3
Brain Gain and Retention Strategies	0	2	1	2	2	0
Knowledge Sharing Tools and Mechanism	2	1	1	0	1	2
Total Score for Knowledge	4	5	3	5	5	5

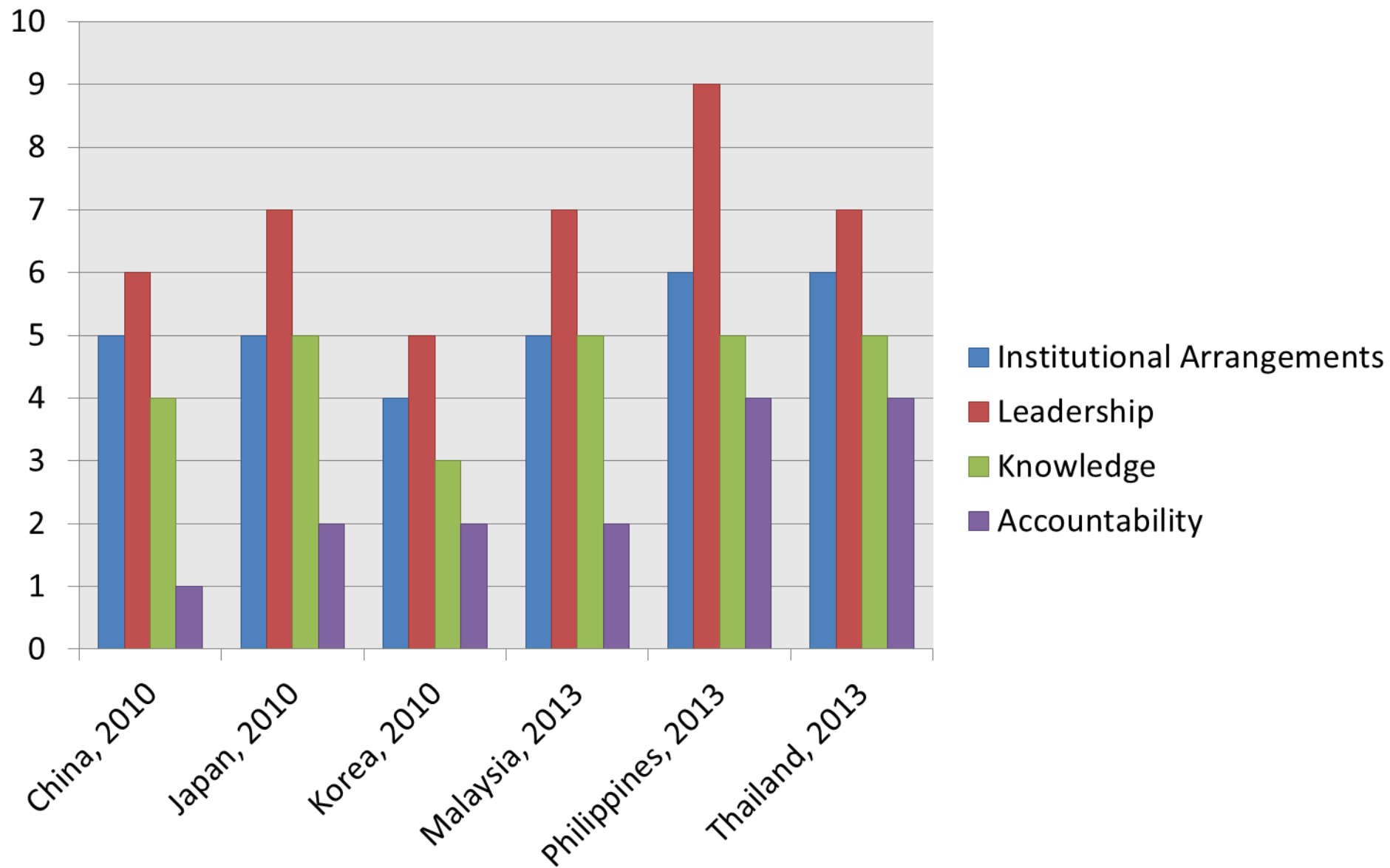
Scale: 0 – no identified examples; 1 – existing examples, but not mainstreamed across system;
 2 – existing examples and identifiable achievements/impacts; 3 – mainstreamed across system and high achievements/impacts.

Accountability

Components of Accountability	China	Japan	Korea	Malaysia	Philippines	Thailand
Audit Systems and Practice Standards	1	0	0	1	1	2
Participatory Planning Mechanism	0	1	1	1	2	1
Stakeholder Feedback Mechanism ⁽²⁾	0	1	1	0	1	1
Total Score for Accountability	1	2	2	2	4	4

Scale: 0 – no identified examples; 1 – existing examples, but not mainstreamed across system;
 2 – existing examples and identifiable achievements/impacts; 3 – mainstreamed across system and high achievements/impacts.

Overall Scores Achieved



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.

Five capacity improvements for ESC promotion, include:

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. Improving Accountability as a means to strengthen the overall system;
5. Addressing ESC as a thematic approach to ESD and SCP.



Roles and Responsibilities in promoting SC

- Governments are overburdened with responsibility for driving transitions in patterns of consumption and production.
- Governments should coordinate **better responsibility sharing** across a multiplicity of actors.
- **Multi-stakeholder networks** provide a cooperative dynamic, thus progress occurs as incremental improvements from different sectors on a regular basis in an add-on process.
- **Coordination between national and local governments** is important. Local governments can initiate effective ESC projects as they can better respond to local contexts and citizens' needs.
- *“The Philippines experience provides ample evidence that the integration of the three pillars of sustainable development cannot be achieved solely at the national level. Instead, it is realized both at the local community and national levels as consolidation of communities are formed and strengthened. A sustainable nation must be a community of sustainable local communities.”*

Applying Multiple Policy Mechanisms and Inter-Ministerial Approaches

- Governments have a **diverse range of policy tools** and mechanisms to use in promoting sustainable consumption.
- A **holistic and integrative approach** to promote sustainable consumption is needed.
- This approach should address 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.

The U.K. government's policy strategy in *Securing the Future* (2005) provides a five stage approach:

1) Enable, 2) Encourage, 3) Engage, 4) Exemplify, 5) Catalyse


(adapted from HM Government 2005, 24-41).

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Define Policy Priorities and Target Areas for SC

- Confusion over the meaning of *more-sustainable* consumption hinders effective policy formation.
- **Identification of target consumption areas** that have significant environmental impacts to distinguish relevant actions that individuals can take for sustainable consumption.
- Need to **extend understanding of SC** beyond reducing environmental impacts through energy/resource efficiency by **clearly identifying the behaviours and values** needed to encourage this public transition towards SC.
- **Public participation in forming national visions** on low-carbon societies, SC and sustainable lifestyles to increase public ownership and responsibility for achieving these visions.
- *“ESC’s focus on the practical elements of sustainability is seen as something beneficial for the citizens to scale-up best practices where available. Herein, the role of government will gradually change from a service provider or a regulator to a facilitator.”*

Improving Accountability as a means to strengthen the overall system

- Building accountability capacities at level of 1) inputs to the planning phase, 2) throughputs of the implementation phase, and 3) review of the outputs and results of the initiative.
 1. As input, **Participatory planning mechanisms** directly improves the accountability lever and indirectly adds strength to the institutional arrangements and leadership levers.
 2. As throughput to project implementation, a **work plan** detailing **target achievements/performance standards** will clarify required activities in an easily implementable manner.
 3. **Monitoring and Evaluation** 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.
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Addressing ESC as a thematic approach to ESD and SCP

- Education for Sustainable Consumption can synergise different aspects of the overall sustainable development agenda, especially SCP, ESD and sustainable lifestyles.
- ESC provides a process of **active, communicative learning** that challenges patterns of behaviour through a process of **integrating science & values into a socially responsible worldview** that places the consumer at the center of a dynamic system rather than as an outside observer of a stable system.
- Reviewing the main drivers for sustainability, the **consumption driver** is where people can take significant personal action.
*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.***

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*Thank you for your
kind attention!*

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