

Japanese cooperation activities to promote Environmental Education and Education for Sustainable Development in Samoa, and the challenge to strengthen ESD networks in the Pacific region

Yoshichika AKASAKI

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1. Background and Purpose

Environmental issues in Pacific islands countries (PICs) include waste management and vulnerability to climate change. Environmental Education (EE) is important to enhance awareness of environmental problems such as these and promote environmental actions to solve them. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is also recognized as a comprehensive concept in relation to three key areas of sustainable development: society, environment and economy with culture as an underlying dimension. Regional frameworks to promote EE and ESD in the Pacific region are already in place, but developing national plans to promote EE and ESD are a future challenge for PICs. PICs have difficulties to promote EE and ESD at the local and national level owing to environmental vulnerability, limited resources and weak economic structure. Japan therefore has supported the efforts of PICs to promote EE and ESD through international cooperation activities. Japan, as a country proposed Decade of ESD in 2002 world summit, can be expected to take a leading role in promoting ESD globally. Considering the current status of EE and ESD in the Pacific region, my study aims to 1) clarify the current status of Japanese cooperation activities to promote EE and ESD for PICs, focusing on Samoa, and 2) propose ideas to strengthen networks and networking for sharing information and experience on EE and ESD in the region.

2. Methodology

This thesis presents information compiled from a literature review of primary and secondary sources relating to EE and ESD, hearings with personnel formerly engaged in international cooperation, and two case-studies of Japanese technical cooperation activities to promote ESD in the Pacific region: 1) a JICA dispatch program, which sends EE JOCVs to Samoa, and 2) a JICA training course held in Nishinomiya for participants from PICs.

3. Conclusion

From my analysis of this information, I suggest that five key points should be considered to promote EE and ESD in the Pacific region: 1) introducing ESD in locally relevant ways, 2) making use of existing mechanisms and activities, 3) effective information sharing, 4) strengthening partnership between public and private sectors and 5) enhancing international cooperation activities toward PICs' self reliance. On the basis of these key points, I propose a model to strengthen networks and networking for sharing information and experience on EE and ESD in the Pacific region, at and between the local, national and regional level. My model focuses on the case of Japan and Samoa's collaborative cooperation and suggests that PICs should 1) emphasize the importance of Samoan traditions to introduce ESD principles at local villages and develop local ESD coordinators, 2) create opportunities to discuss EE and ESD at the national level among various key members from governments, businesses, NGOs, schools and villages and share knowledge and activities effectively on EE and ESD, 3) make use of existing regional frameworks, networks and information sharing systems to promote EE and ESD. The model also proposes that Japanese international cooperation activities should support and underpin Pacific ESD networks at all three levels, by 1) training trainers at the local level, 2) introducing Japanese practices of ESD promotion and CSR at the national level and 3) supporting regional organizations involved in EE and ESD, and international organizations which promote ESD worldwide.