Title:

Education for Sustainable Consumption: Effective strategies to promote responsible consumer behaviour

Authors:

Didham, Robert J. & Choi, Mee Young

Authors Affiliation:

Robert J. DIDHAM, Ph.D.
Education Policy Specialist
Governance and Capacity Group
INSTITUTE FOR GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGIES (IGES)
Hayama, Japan

Mee Young CHOI, Ph.D.
Programme Specialist in Education
UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION (UNESCO)
Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific – Jakarta, Indonesia

Contact Information:

Robert DIDHAM
Governance and Capacity Group
Institute for Global Environmental Strategies
2108-11 Kamiyamaguchi, Hayama, Kanagawa
240-0115 Japan

Phone: +81-46-826-9589
Facsimile: +81-46-855-3809

E-mail: didham@iges.or.jp
URL: http://www.iges.or.jp
Abstract:

This paper investigates means to improve the conceptualisation and implementation of Education for Sustainable Consumption (ESC). The main objective of this work is to establish a clear framework of how governments can advance sustainable consumption by influencing consumer behaviour, as is reflected in the primary research question for this paper: How can governments best influence individual consumers to proactively participate in sustainable consumption and environmentally responsible behaviour?

Following a review of several theories on human behaviour and behavioural change, it is explained that ESC must address both how to affect the individual consumer at the level of his or her decision-making on consumption and also how to develop a supportive social infrastructure that not only fosters sustainable consumption but eventually makes this the norm. A framework of assessment for ESC initiatives is put forth based on five primary components and twenty-six aggregate criteria. This framework provides means to analyse both the influence on internal factors at the level of personal attitudes and on external factors at the level of social contexts.

The assessment framework is applied to a series of case studies from Japan, China and Republic of Korea in order to investigate the ways in which different policies and activities influence consumer behaviour towards sustainable consumption. The background of ESC in the national policies of each country is explained, and good practice cases from each country are presented. Both commonalities and differences are identified across the three countries and their ESC practice.

Policy Implications are highlighted regarding the general structure and specific content of effective ESC policies. The ESC assessment framework provides a tool for conceptualising good policy structure and can facilitate the policy planning process.

Keywords:
Sustainable Consumption, Education for Sustainable Consumption, Responsible Consumer Behaviour, Behavioural Change
1. INTRODUCTION

The promotion of Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) through policy can occur in many different ways. Regulations and economic incentives are effective instruments for advancing clean production practices and providing value to specific types of consumption. Advancing government green procurement strategies not only has a direct impact to ensure that purchases by the public sector meet environmental standards, but it also results in the secondary impact of strengthening the overall market of green products/services thus increasing the quality and quantity of sustainable consumption options available to the consumer. However, current policies on SCP lack clear identification of mechanisms and strategies to promote responsible consumer behaviour. Education for Sustainable Consumption (ESC) is a more specific activity that focuses on directly influencing consumer behaviour and choice by encouraging consumers' proactive participation in sustainable consumption. ESC policy faces an impediment though due to the lack of understanding of how policy (and its resulting practice) can directly influence consumer choice and lead to conscientious changes in behaviour.

ESC is a topic arising from two distinct albeit related fields. The promotion of sustainable consumption and consumer awareness raising is a topic discussed for achieving SCP. ESC is also acknowledged as one of the priority subjects under Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). Though ESD and SCP are interrelated fields that in fact some consider as sub-topics themselves of sustainable development, it is important to recognise the different approaches that these two fields have brought to promoting sustainable consumption. In general, efforts under the field of SCP aim at creating green markets and making it easier to practice sustainable consumption, while efforts as part of ESD aim at educating individuals to be more aware of the impacts of their consumption options and to influence changes in their behaviour. These two approaches can be broadly labelled as focussing on external factors and on internal factors respectively. This division is not absolute, but is rather best understood as a continuum in approaches towards ESC.

This paper addresses the question: How can governments best influence individual consumers to proactively participate in sustainable consumption and environmentally responsible behaviour? Although this work takes a specific focus on improving and
advancing ESC policy and its practical implementation, it must be recognised that the end goal of these activities are to strengthen consumers’ proactive participation in sustainable consumption and responsible lifestyles. Thus, the main efforts of this report are aimed at identifying clear mechanisms and strategies for advancing governmental capacity to influence consumer behaviour.

In regards to sustainable consumption, ESC is the key element in increasing the self-awareness of consumers, advancing consumers’ independent sense of social responsibility, and stimulating their autonomous choice to actively participate in sustainable consumption. Beyond this more ethical/moral challenge for ESC, it also entails more functional knowledge in regards to the consumer learning the analytical skills to decipher what are sustainable and unsustainable consumption choices. Modern consumption patterns are recognised as one of the leading causes of our current unsustainable patterns of growth and development, thus the idea of sustainable consumption refers to a new social and cultural paradigm that challenges individuals with, “participating in the ongoing values debate about quality of life; developing critical analysis of information; controlling the human impact on nature; preventing life-style related illnesses; exercising social responsibility; and maintaining public discourse in order to guarantee accountability” (Thoresen (2008) p.8).

2. STRUCTURE OF PAPER

There are many opportunities for advancing sustainable consumption, and while they present numerous valid and interconnected research opportunities it was necessary for the limits of this research to identify certain priorities related to ESC. The primary focus of research in this work is on how governments can advance ESC practice. Based on consultations with international and national specialists in ESD and SCP (see Choi et.al (2009) for relevant policy dialogues), three priorities for advancing governmental support of ESC are identified (see Figure 1). The first priority is the identification of clear mechanisms that can be implemented from the level of national policy to influence consumer behaviour. The second priority is providing appropriate capacity building for policy-decision makers so they have the skills and understanding to implement effective ESC policy. The third priority is to increase political dialogues on ESC to secure cooperation and good practice, ideally through a regional network on ESC. As the second and third priorities are based on
actions that build off the knowledge generated in priority one, it was chosen that this research would primarily focus on developing an understanding of the mechanisms for influencing consumer behaviour towards sustainable consumption.

The discussion in section 3 presents an overview of the relevant theories on behavioural change and provides an outline for understanding how to influence consumer behaviour. In section 4, the assessment framework applied during the research and analysis is explained. The selected case studies from Japan, China and Republic of Korea are introduced and examined in section 5. In section 6, the main findings from the case study analysis are summarised and recommendations on ESC policy structure are made.

3. INFLUENCING CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

The study of consumer behaviour and how best to influence it in a positive direction remains a highly debated subject. Consumer behaviour and behavioural change have been studied from the perspectives of psychology, sociology, marketing, economics and social anthropology. As we approach the issue of sustainable consumption, many of the previous concepts of consumer behaviour and consumer sovereignty appear unequipped to cope with the inherent principles of responsible citizenship latent in the sustainable consumption rhetoric. The market remains guided by the belief of mainstream economics that unhindered, self-interests are the best means for achieving social benefits (based on a generalised interpretation of Adam Smith’s concept of “the invisible hand” of the market). Under the free-market approach of modern economics, the idea of being a ‘good citizen’ became inextricably linked to a mandate for regular consumption (Hobson (2002)). This view of the unhindered consumer is flawed from the outset as it does not recognise the numerous social and cultural factors that have extensive influence on consumer behaviour.
As Tim Jackson (2005) explains, environmental and sustainability concerns are difficult for consumers to account for as the impacts of consumption choices are usually not immediate or spatially isolated. “Moreover, it is often the cumulative effect of many people’s actions over time that is problematic rather than [the individual consumer’s] actions per se” (Jackson (2005) p.35). Furthermore, there are also major difficulties for understanding how values affect consumer behaviour because in the market only purchases count or register desires. It is highly feasible that there are people who hold pro-environmental values but are blocked from expressing these in their consumer actions due to multiple barriers that are present in regards to sustainable consumption, including affordability, availability, convenience of product, feeling of powerlessness in effecting change. It is also important to note that overarching social and institutional structures can effectively lock consumers into specific consumption patterns. “Hence while ecological citizens struggle to use their limited influence to transform the market through mainstream channels, the constraining institutional factors which delimit the choices available are being reproduced societally, and the major consumption decisions are being made out of the public eye, away from market pressures” (Seyfang (2005) p.297).

Clearly understanding and explaining consumer behaviour and consumer choice is a difficult task. There are many available models of consumer behaviour, but they all fall short in explaining variance of behaviour among differing consumers. The Value-Belief-Norm theory of pro-environmental behaviour (Stern, et.al. (1999)) provides one of the strongest basis for analysing shifts in consumer behaviour towards sustainable consumption. This work builds off of Schwartz’s Norm Activation model (1977), and links it to environmental value theory. The Value-Belief-Norm theory postulates that pro-environmental values, an awareness of the consequences of one’s actions, and an ascription of personal responsibility can lead to the acceptance of a new environmental paradigm. Through this process, an individual moves towards developing a personal norm for pro-environmental behaviour (Stern, et.al. (1999) pp.84-6).

Cialdini’s Focus Theory of Normative Conduct (1990, 1991) provides recognition of the importance social norms can play in shaping our behaviour. The focus theory distinguishes two types of norms: descriptive – informing our own behaviour based on what we experience others doing, and injunctive – behavioural constraints based
on the conceived moral rules and guidelines of a social group (Jackson (2005) pp.59-60). This is significant because it demonstrates that though individual behavioural change is often based on achieving value learning on a one by one basis, if a critical mass of people who demonstrate pro-environmental behaviour forms then this can have a much larger effect by becoming a conditioning social norm.

Tim Jackson provides an extensive review of numerous existing social and psychological theories concerning human behaviour and change in his work Motivating Sustainable Consumption (2005). As already noted in section 1 regarding the two approaches to ESC found in SCP and ESD, Jackson identifies two distinct approaches to understanding consumer behaviour. These are the internal approach that views behaviour as entirely isolated to the individual’s values/norms and the external approach that investigates the social and institutional factors that shape/constrain behaviour (p. 89). However, there are now several theories that attempt to integrate these two perspectives and consider a wider range of factors influencing behaviour.

The Attitude-Behaviour-Context (ABC) Model developed by Stern (2000) and his colleagues is one of most insightful attempts to integrate these approaches. Behaviour (B) is presented in this model as product of the interaction between personal attitudes/values (A) and the existing context of social/institutional factors (C).

Based on the application of this model, Stern finds, “The attitude-behaviour association is strongest when contextual factors are neutral and approaches zero when contextual forces are strongly positive or negative, effectively compelling or prohibiting the behaviour in question” ((2000) p. 415).

\[ Source: \text{Jackson (2005) p. 92} \]
This is significant in that it demonstrates that when contextual factors either highly facilitate or hinder potential sustainable consumption actions then people’s existing attitudes have little influence over the action they will choose, but that when contextual factors are neutral people’s choices are influenced much more by their attitudes (see Figure 2). There are more complicated multivariable models, but Jackson explains, “As the conceptual complexity of the models rise, however, their empirical applicability diminishes” ((2005) p.100).

This review of behavior change theories provides first a clear requirement to influence consumer behaviour towards sustainable consumption as it is imprudent to expect rational choice in an individualistic, free-market to achieve this type of social goal. Second, this review identifies both internal factors of personal attitude/values and external factors of social/institutional contexts as significant areas for influencing consumer behaviour. Third, it demonstrates the high importance that should be placed on contextual factors as the likelihood of people consuming sustainably correlates directly to the availability of sustainable consumption options. However, even though Figure 2 shows that as contextual factors positively increase individual behaviour is less influenced by personal attitude, a fourth point must be considered regarding the difficulty of eradicating all unsustainable consumption options.

The ABC model applied to recycling behaviour does indicate that as sustainable consumption contexts move towards 100% then individual behaviour is positively influenced almost entirely by these external factors, but it also oversimplifies the possibility of achieving a 100% sustainable consumption context. This would require extensive financial investment and take numerous years, and even then it would be unlikely that the existence of a strong context for sustainable consumption would directly lead to the elimination of all unsustainable consumption options. When contextual factors are neutral or improving from a negative position, then the internal factors of personal attitudes, values and habits can have a stronger impact on influencing behaviour.

4. FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSING ESC INITIATIVES

Recognising the diverse factors that precondition consumption practices, it is necessary to consider personal and individual practice in conjunction with social and institutional systems. A broad understanding of education enables consideration of
formal, non-formal, and informal educational processes. As such, it is possible to consider direct information and knowledge which is provided to the individual as part of ESC, and also to view changes to social and political systems that facilitate sustainable consumption practice from the perspective of experiential education. The development of an infrastructure that presents better and easier possibilities for sustainable consumption can achieve important action learning outcomes.

At the level of the individual consumer, ESC should work to promote responsible behaviour and develop environmental citizenship. Regarding social and political systems, ESC should be linked directly with efforts to influence society’s patterns of consumption and work to develop a supportive infrastructure for SCP. Finally, there is a need to consider the overall strategic procedure of an ESC initiative to connect these divergent components in order to catalyze overall practice of sustainable consumption. Five distinct components were identified as areas for assessing the functionality of ESC initiatives, as follows:

**Personal and Individual Practice**
- Promote Responsible Behaviour *(as procedure for affecting internal factors)*;
- Develop Environmental Citizenship *(as objective for influencing personal behaviour)*;

**Social and Political Systems**
- Influence Patterns of Consumption *(as procedure for affecting external factors)*;
- Develop Infrastructure for Sustainable Consumption and Production *(as objective for establishing supportive contexts)*;

**Strategic Procedure**
- Catalyzing Practice of Sustainable Consumption *(to ensure procedural integration)*.

The identification of the five primary components to promote sustainable consumption provides the basic model of how ESC is understood and investigated in this work. Means to influence these components were investigated across a wide range of theories and disciplines. The ability to assess the primary components for promoting sustainable consumption has been functionalised by adding subcomponents to each component. These subcomponents serve as aggregate criteria from which the efforts of an ESC initiative regarding each component can be evaluated. This framework is being put forth both as a means of assessment on the effectiveness of a given ESC initiative and as an outline of what should be considered when preparing a new campaign on consumer ESC *(see Table 1 for full details of the assessment framework)*.
TABLE 1 – ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK OF ESC COMPONENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Target: Personal and Individual Practice</th>
<th>Target: Social and Political Systems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Promote Responsible Behaviour</strong>&lt;sup&gt;n.b.1&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Stages of Change in a decision-maker’s consumption practices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Precontemplation</td>
<td>the decision-maker is unaware of subject and information (education and awareness raising is necessary to initialise contemplation);</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contemplation</td>
<td>the decision-maker begins to consider the subject, but does not link to action (clear linkages must be drawn between the issue at hand and the individual’s daily practices);</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision/Determination</td>
<td>conscious choice is made to take action and incorporate into daily practices (practical examples to support action must be demonstrated);</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>the decision-maker tests/experiences ways to incorporate new beliefs into practical behaviour (new behaviour and action must be supported and rewarded);</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance</td>
<td>the decision-maker continues with regular practice of this new behaviour and incorporates into practices of a wider community (links should be drawn between new behaviour and wider socio-cultural changes).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Develop Environmental Citizenship</strong>&lt;sup&gt;n.b.2&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Effective Value Promotion for consumers’ proactive participation in sustainable consumption</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro-environmental values</td>
<td>a personal belief that protecting the environment is important;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Empowerment</td>
<td>that each person can be a powerful agent of change;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>a sense of environmental citizenship and duty;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple actions</td>
<td>recognition that little steps can lead to big impacts;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Vision</td>
<td>an inspired view of achieving a sustainable society.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Influence Patterns of Consumption</strong>&lt;sup&gt;n.b.3&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Efficient Tools and Instruments governments can utilise to encourage SCP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulatory instruments</td>
<td>Used mainly to enforce minimum standards;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic instruments</td>
<td>Negative taxing, positive subsidies and green procurement strategies;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational instruments</td>
<td>Research/development, production training, public education, participatory learning methodologies, critical analysis techniques;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative instruments</td>
<td>Improved production by technology transfer and voluntary agreements;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informational instruments</td>
<td>Consumer information: eco-labeling, auditing and reporting, environmental quality targets, consumer advice.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Develop Supportive Infrastructure for SCP</strong>&lt;sup&gt;n.b.4&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Preconditions for Consumption to consider in developing a supportive infrastructure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic development</td>
<td>Secure access to sustainable purchasing choices, reduce product costs, improve productivity and strengthen sustainable livelihood opportunities;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technological progress</td>
<td>Reduce resource consumption, promote product efficiency and dematerialisation;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political settings &amp; policy actions</td>
<td>Provide supportive political framework for transition to sustainable consumption and low-carbon lifestyles, also ensure policy consistency;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural &amp; historical contexts</td>
<td>Respond to deep-set codes of conduct that frame knowledge and behaviour;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social factors and conditioning</td>
<td>Address social meaning and symbolic value of material possession;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological motives</td>
<td>Address personal understandings of happiness and quality of life.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Catalyzing Practice of Sustainable Consumption</strong>&lt;sup&gt;n.b.5&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Procedural Steps for systematic development towards sustainable consumption</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enable</td>
<td>remove barriers to sustainable consumption, develop supportive infrastructure, educate and give information about how to consume sustainably;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage</td>
<td>reward good behaviour, penalise bad behaviour, and enforce minimum standards;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage</td>
<td>involve the public, communicate and campaign, utilise media resources, stimulate community action;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exemplify</td>
<td>lead by example, develop good practice and achieve a policy consistency;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catalyse</td>
<td>building from the other four points, make major shifts in social and cultural habits to engender a cultural paradigm grounded in sustainable practice.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2 values were identified by authors as key concepts in the theories of responsible environmental behaviour and environmental citizenship
3 adapted from Tyson, ed. 2006. Policy Instruments for Resource Efficiency: Towards Sustainable Consumption and Production, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ).
5 adapted from HM Government. 2005. Securing the Future: Delivering UK sustainable development strategy. DEFRA.
5. CASE INVESTIGATION

Japan, China and the Republic of Korea are all making considerable efforts to advance Sustainable Consumption and to educate consumers about the imperative for sustainable consumption and development. These efforts are relatively new in each of the three countries, and there has as of yet been little analysis of the affects these policies and actions have had. Work on green procurement is the most advanced activity by all three governments towards sustainable consumption, and this has clearly resulted in the growth of the green market in each of these countries. Work on education for sustainable consumption is increasing in these countries, and more campaigns are being aimed directly at consumers.

The three countries selected for case studies are the three highest consuming nations in Asia-Pacific. Japan is the second highest world contributor to GDP (in nominal terms), China is third, and the Republic of Korea is fifteenth (as of 2008). Together, these three countries contribute 16.9% of global GDP.¹ These three countries have a significant opportunity to provide leadership in the Asia-Pacific region towards sustainable consumption. As the primary consuming nations in a region that is rapidly trying to emulate the consumptions patterns lauded by high-consumption societies, these countries set trends that will be followed throughout the region. Furthermore, as the primary producers of value-added items, these countries can encourage good practice in other Asian countries where primary materials are produced through a process of corporate social responsibility from the parent companies in these three countries.

There are two key features of the primary ESC components in the selected good practice cases² in China, Japan and Republic of Korea (ROK): 1) As the identified commonality - all five components of ESC were commonly identified across the three countries, although 2) As the identified diversity - there was a range of application amongst aggregate criteria of the components. These two key findings indicate the significance of not only utilising the primary ESC components but also reflecting indigenous social and cultural factors to affect consumer’s values and motivations in

² ESC practice cases were collected from China, Japan and Republic of Korea (ROK) and analysed based on the assessment of framework of ESC mechanisms (see also Choi and Didham, 2010 for details of a total of eleven analysed cases).
implementing efficient strategies as part of a national framework for sustainable consumption as briefly summarised in the diversities across the three countries below.

ESC in China has a short history which can be traced back in relation to Environmental Education (EE) and Green Consumption since the 1990s. Nevertheless, under the central government’s strong promotions as shown by a series of national regulations (such as Agenda 21 on Population and Environment and Development in the 21st Century in 1994, National Action Guideline of Environmental Communication and Education in 1996, and Government Procurement in 2002), development of ESC in China has shown noticeable achievements, although it is still a very new theme as part of EE. In comparison with the analysis of good practice ESC cases in Japan and ROK, it is distinguishable that Chinese cases strongly tackle individual and social values through the application of “simple actions” which ultimately builds to “exemplification” of similar practices in other places across the country as introduced in Good Practice Case 1 below. Good Practice Case 1 proves the significance of “simple actions” in ESC for tackling cultural habits to promote citizens’ participation in sustainable consumption in daily practice. However, an inspiring view of achieving a sustainable society by providing “future vision” through ESC activities is not clear across the Chinese cases. This fact appears linked with a weakness in “maintenance” of ESC achievements which needs to be critically considered to promote people’s responsible behaviours within a national framework over a long-term period.

The Japanese government’s attention to consumer and green purchasing issues has a long history as shown in the establishment of the Quality-of-Life Bureau in the Economic Planning Agency in 1965 and The Consumer Protection Fundamental Act in 1968, while actual ESC was introduced into the School Curriculum in 1992. Citizens also became increasingly interested in eco-products as the Green Purchasing Network, Green Purchasing Law and Consumer Basic Act were established in 1996, 2000 and 2004 respectively. In comparison with development of ESC in China and Korea led by the central government’s strong regulatory promotions, it is noticeable that diverse social ESC projects have been implemented in Japan mainly at the lead of The Cabinet Office and the Ministry of Environment and also ESC within formal education led by the Ministry of Education. All analysed Japanese ESC practice cases have adopted strong tools to address individual
'psychological motivations”. It is notable that “informational instruments” are actively
applied in each practice case to provide diverse choices to consumers in order to
encourage them to participate in sustainable consumption for a long term impact. It is
also notable that “future vision” and “maintenance” are strengthened, which is not
found in any of the analysed Chinese cases. Nevertheless, social and cultural factors
are not strongly addressed in Japanese cases as much as identified in Chinese and
Korean cases which are closely linked with the final aggregate criteria of the final
component “catalyzing practice of sustainable consumption” as shown in Good
Practice Case 2 below.

ESC in Korea has been acknowledged as part of EE which has developed along with
school-based projects since the first national curriculum revision in 1985. However,
ESC within formal education is still in a background era in comparison with the
significance of ESC development within social education sector which has been
developing through campaigns for enlightenment since the 1990s owing to a rapid
growth of NGOs quantitatively. In fact, ESC is still a missing point in Environmental
Education Promotion Law established in 2009. However, Eco-Product Purchasing
Promotion Law established in 2004 (revised in 2009) strengthened ESC through
incentives and education to encourage both industries and consumers, i.e. in
consideration of both producers and consumers. A recent national movement on
Green Growth also indicates the Korean government’s strong willingness towards
ESC as shown its policy direction on Education for Green Growth set up in 2009 to
promote sustainable lifestyles across the country, even though it is still at the
beginning of its development. From the analysis of ESC practices, it is noticeable that
Korean cases strongly utilise diverse “psychological motives” from individual desires
for enjoyment of indigenous culture to a broad sense of local community as shown in
Good Practice Case 3 below. Diverse “informational instruments” to provide eco-
labelling information and consumer advice are also applied in all analysed cases
likewise identified in the Japanese cases. However, providing clear “future vision”
and ‘catalysing” socio-cultural transitions for sustainability are still not reflected
enough to “maintain” these results for a long-term period.
5. FINDINGS: IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY STRUCTURE AND CONTENTS

Primary Significance for General Policy Structure

The findings with primary significance across the eleven cases relate to the distinction of the five primary components for promoting sustainable consumption. Conclusive findings on the relevance and importance of these five components can be drawn from across the case studies which provide specific implications for the general structure of ESC policies.

1) The Five Primary Components of ESC – entitled “develop environmental citizenship”, “promote responsible behaviour”, “catalyzing practice of sustainable consumption” “influence patterns of consumption” and “develop infrastructure for SCP” are significant structural components in formulating effective ESC policy.

2) Motivational Factors of Personal and Individual Practice – are often underrepresented in the planning process of policy frameworks at the national
level, but these factors are essential to encourage individuals’ voluntary participation and empowerment as personal changes in consumption practices appear rooted in meaningful and practical experience.

3) **Supportive Social and Political Systems** – provide the practical facilitation for sustainable consumption becoming the preferable and normal option of practice. However, to develop a supportive infrastructure for SCP, it is necessary to consider directly the preconditioning factors that drive current consumption practices. The analysis of efficient governmental tools and instruments for promoting sustainable consumption indicates a complexity of social and political systems which this research could not fully explore due to its limited data and scope.

4) **Well-balanced Contents of ESC Policy** – across the three targets of the identified ESC components “Personal and Individual Practice”, “Social and Political Systems” and “Strategic Procedure” can result in a synergy effect for effective implementation of ESC policy. This appears especially true in developing a supportive infrastructure for sustainable consumption as a vital tool for enabling people to maintain their proactive participation in daily life.

5) **Social and Cultural Contents of ESC Policy** – which reflect indigenous contexts regarding consumption patterns are significant when we consider how ESC can have specific national and local applications, especially for effecting change over a short period of time. Regarding prevalent values towards food and material possessions, traditional consumption habits appear closely linked with socio-cultural contexts and factors thus remaining very resistant to change. ESC policies linking socio-cultural and psychological motivations with traditional habits are necessary to address personal understandings of happiness and quality of life in order to develop a new value of material possessions, and this in turn provides the stimulus for socio-cultural shifts towards a normalised vision of sustainable consumption.

**Secondary Significance for Specific Policy Contents**
There are also several findings from the case studies regarding specific aggregate criteria in the assessment framework. These findings demonstrate a secondary significance because they are not represented across all cases. Thus, it is possible to
highlight these as good practice areas of effective policies, however to provide conclusive evidence on the level of significance of each policy measure identified below requires further research.

1) **Economic Incentives** – The provision of financial savings/benefits for sustainable consumption is demonstrated as an easy way to engage consumers and promote action. It is possible to divide economic incentives into two categories based on amount of savings (small or large) and on regularity of consumption (frequent or seldom). Small savings in relation to frequent consumption actions appears to have more impact on social and cultural factors, then do large savings on irregular consumption actions.

2) **Regulation Coupled with Information Provision** – When regulations are put in place to stop specific negative consumption behaviours, the utilisation of informational instruments is an important part of the effectiveness of this policy measure to help people understand the purpose of the regulations and encourage the maintenance of practice. That is, people’s commitment to long-term practice of sustainable consumption can be catalysed when they gain more understanding through information provision as strongly shown in several cases.

3) **Correlation between “Maintenance” and “Future Vision”** – Four of the five cases that achieved the “maintenance” criteria of the first component also indicated “future vision”. In this research, “future vision” encourages individuals that they can affect change towards an achievable positive future and sustainable society. The significance of this correlation deserves attention in forthcoming research as there may be a causal linkage between the promotion of “future vision” and consumer progress towards long-term maintenance of sustainable consumption.

4) **Visualising “Responsibility” Rationales for Participation in Sustainable Consumption** – To facilitate more individuals’ direct engagement, providing information about the clear consequences between their consumption choices and the wider environmental and social impacts of these practices appears to be vital. In particular, integrating a sense of responsibility with a sense of
community seems to strengthen ESC projects’ long term success as demonstrated in the Korean case “Green Shop Movement”.

5) **Missing Linkage between “Simple Actions” and “Future Vision”** – Though both criteria are important factors in developing environmental citizenship, there appears to be difficulty in aligning these two values. When simple actions are promoted, it appears difficult to achieve future vision, and vice versa. Nevertheless, as shown in some Chinese cases, an ESC strategy of “simple action” seems to be very effective as the clear guidance facilitates people to practice with better understanding. Future research is therefore needed to address how best to reconcile this deficiency in current policy.

References:


Hobson K. “Competing Discourses of Sustainable Consumption: does the rationalisation of lifestyles’ make sense?”. *Environmental Politics* 2002;11(2):95-120.


