

# Education for Sustainability in Global Youth Initiatives: A Stakeholder Approach

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**Abstract—** This paper attempts to explore and analyze ramifications of embedding experiential education for sustainable development components into informal learning context through global youth initiatives. Using Philippines, Indonesia, Fiji, Australia, New Zealand and Japan as case studies, the article examined challenges and opportunities in holistically integrating education for sustainability into the SSEAYP and SWY as an informal social learning setting. SSEAYP and SWY are youth programs of Japan for global young leaders promoting mutual understanding and regional cooperation. Utilizing Skype, semi-structured interviews of the main stakeholders of the program, triangulated with secondary sources provided the data for analysis of a qualitative, multiple case study. Results highlighted two identified themes reflecting the challenges and opportunities if ESD is to be incorporated into the youth program namely, stakeholder dynamics: *stakeholder role and responsibility, diversity, social network building, investment and social capital*; and complexities in understanding Sustainable Development: *SD dimensions through discussion topics, language, concept and context, moving from awareness to action, sustainability reporting, standards, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and sustainable future from youths' interest, commitment and vision*. The stakeholder approach enabled former participating youths, youth leaders of respective governments and Japanese organizing entities to take actions towards the sustainability of their programs for youth development. SSEAYP and SWY as global youth initiatives present an opportunity to shape sustainability policies in the ASEAN – Asia Pacific region, embrace concepts entrenched in sustainable development, and have an enormous potential to extend frameworks and aspects of action competence leading to education for a sustainable future.

**Keywords—** Education for sustainability, global youth initiatives, Social learning, Stakeholder approach.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Over the years, sustainable development continues to confound academics and practitioners about a meaning that will unify theory and practice leading to a desired sustainability state. *Agenda 21* (United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, 1992) and *Our Common Future* (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987) consider education as an effective strategy to approach the challenges encapsulated in understanding sustainable development leading to sustainability practice. The same documents recognize the value of stakeholder cooperation and community participation among various educational platforms and sectors of society.

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Freeman's (1984) stakeholder theory propelled discourses leading to the imperatives of stakeholder thinking and approaches crucial to management strategies towards sustainability.

Young people of the world are considered vital stakeholders in achieving the goals set for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). Youth comprises nearly 30 per cent of the global population (United Nations Environment Program, n.d.), and their involvement in major decision-making and implementation of any development program is critical. Often regarded as the target for ESD program, youth are also seen as active partners in shaping a sustainable world and vital component for ESD program (UNESCO, n.d.). Educating youth towards sustainable development is an indispensable step that will underpin our journey towards a sustainable future.

This research explores education for sustainability through social learning from global youth initiatives, that although have never claimed sustainable development advocacy, have the potential to contribute to a sustainable future. The ship youth program of Japan, namely Ship for World Youth (SWY), and Ship for Southeast Asian Youth Program (SSEAYP) are annual global initiatives for youth which involve young leaders from all over the world living and learning together for about two months on board a cruise ship. The SWY has been participated in by about 64 countries since its implementation in 1988, while SSEAYP has included the 10 member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Japan since 1974 (IYEO, n.d.). It has the aim of broadening the global view of the participating youths; promoting mutual understanding and friendship between Japanese and foreign youths, as well as cultivating the spirit of international cooperation and the competence to practice it, and furthermore to foster the youths with leadership capability in various areas of international society (SWY, 2012; IYEO, n.d.), thus SWY and SSEAYP seemingly provide fertile ground for social learning. With activities that include discussion and seminar topics covering sustainability issues such as environment (climate change and disaster preparedness); cross-cultural understanding, food and health education, volunteer activities, youth entrepreneurship, school education and international relations among others, SWY and SSEAYP have unconsciously tapped sustainable development's dimensions as environment, economic and socio-cultural dimensions.

The term social learning, although concealing a great deal of diversity (Parson and Clark, 1995), refers to learning that occurs when "Divergent interests, norms, values and construction of reality meet in an environment conducive to learning," (Wals and van der Leij, 2007, p. 18). Social learning is a collective

action and reflection that can take place in multiple levels, from individuals to groups, and even to networks of actors and stakeholders (Wals, 2007; Keen, Brown and Dyball, 2005). Learning that takes place through various experiences of participating youths on board the ship and alumni (stakeholders), even after the program through post-program activities (PPAs), are aligned with social learning towards sustainability.

Having been recognised as critical to the implementation of ESD (Agenda 21, 1992; Our Common Future, 1987; UNESCO, 2009; ESD toolkit, 2002), youth programmes have the potential to achieve the goals leading to a sustainable future. This research explored a seemingly untapped area in the plethora of education for sustainability implementation –informal social learning.

This paper attempts to explore and analyze ramifications of embedding experiential education for sustainable development components into informal learning context through global youth initiatives.

## II. AN IMPETUS FOR GLOBAL YOUTH INITIATIVES

The Cabinet Office (CAO) of Japan started implementing the international youth exchange programme in 1959 through the ‘Japanese Youth Goodwill Mission Program’. In 1967, the Japanese Youth Goodwill Cruise (JYGC) Program started as one of the projects to commemorate the Centennial of the Meiji Restoration. Both the Japanese Youth Goodwill Mission Program and the ‘Japanese Youth Goodwill Cruise Program’ provided youths with the dream of going overseas, since the government would take the initiative to send youths overseas at a time when it was still very difficult for them to go abroad on their own (Ship for World Youth, n.d.; Ship for World Youth Alumni Association [SWYAA], 2012; Cabinet Office of Japan, 2010). In 1974, the Ship for Southeast Asian Youth Program (SSEAYP) marked its humble beginning as a joint programme between Japan and member-countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nation (ASEAN, n.d.) and sets sail annually (CAO of Japan, 2010). Originally, young leaders from Japan and five ASEAN-member countries namely Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand participated in SSEAYP. Eventually, other ASEAN member countries – Brunei Darussalam (1985), Vietnam (1996), Laos P.D.R. and Myanmar (1998), and Cambodia (2000) also joined and sent their youth leaders into the programme. Every year at least six ASEAN countries including Japan are visited as port-of-call so that participating youths (PYs) experience homestay, interaction with local youths, institutional visit, and other culture exchange activities.

After the 21<sup>st</sup> year in 1987, the former JYGC was renamed as Ship for World Youth (SWY) and was established to emphasize involvement of youths from other parts of the world, and to fit into the needs of the era. The earlier version of SWY has prior to its reorganization involved international participants (for example, JYGC4 went to India, 5th went to Sri Lanka, 6th went to Australia and NZ, etc.). Young leaders from a total of 64 countries (Asia-6, Africa-11, Europe-13, Middle East-8, Oceania-9, Central/South America-15, and North America-2) participated in SWY. The program has visited a total of 31

countries (2009). In 2013, SWY was again reorganized as Global Leaders Development Program (GLDP). Since 1967, the JYGC-turned-SWY and recently GLDP has had 47 rounds of exchanges. The main objective of the JYGC Program, which was sending Japanese youth overseas, was changed, so that the exchange between Japanese and foreign youth became one of the main activities.

The content also became more academic through the introduction of activities such as discussions (SSEAYP) and seminars (in the case of SWY), and more interactive highlighting homestays in every port-of-call (SSEAYP only), interaction with local youth, meeting leaders of each country, learning from diverse themes during institutional visits and discussion programs, culture and arts performances on board; even games and solidarity activities (CAO of Japan, 2010). These major changes highlighting that the academic and training components offer opportunities for ESD to be integrated into the ship youth program.

The purpose of the SSEAYP and SWY programmes is to broaden the global view of the participating youths; to promote mutual understanding and friendship between Japanese and foreign youths, as well as to cultivate the spirit of international cooperation and the competence to practice it, and furthermore, to foster the youths with leadership capability in various areas of international society (SWY, 2012; CAO of Japan, 2010). Consequently, former participating youths are encouraged to conduct post-program-activities as part of giving back to society (e.g. leadership training for local youth, campaigns for responsible election, read to lead, adopt-a-school, etc.).

In addition, this program aims at establishing networks and promoting joint activities among youths around the world through providing, as the concrete and practical opportunity, the cohabitation and the joint activity on board the SSEAYP and SWY. The ship youth programmes epitomize an international society, with a wide variety of cultures and ideas making a visible international contribution from the perspective of human resource development. In this annual programme, approximately 140 youth from Japan and 140 youth from various areas of the world for SWY take part, while 40 Japanese youth and 28 from among the 10 ASEAN member-countries for SSEAYP live together on board the ship and engage in various multilateral exchange activities such as studying and discussing common issues from a global viewpoint on board and in the countries visited (“Ship for World Youth,” 2004; CAO of Japan, 2010).

Participating youths, after completing the program, are inducted to the alumni association of their respective countries. These alumni associations facilitate events and program that support the PYs’ planned activities while they were on board the ship. Mostly, these projects are practical applications of learnt principles during their discussions and workshops while on the program. Primarily projects such as building libraries, supporting a student to get education, clean-up and tree planting benefit concerts are aimed at helping their fellow youths become better members of society and make their community a better place to live.

### III. METHODS

A qualitative, action-oriented research approach using case studies where data were analysed through thematic analysis, facilitated the exploratory investigation for this study. In the case study protocol (Yin, 2009; Yin, 2013) are essential steps and procedures which guided the process of data collection; analysis and interpretation. Mainly, data collection was through electronic interviews via Skype. The use of this technology was challenging, as it has not been well-explored in a qualitative case study. The length of the interviews varied so that participants could express freely, but an average of 45 minutes to an hour for each was observed. Thirty-eight (see Table 1) key informants from six Asia-Pacific countries, namely Australia, Fiji, Indonesia, Japan, New Zealand and Philippines participated in the research process.

Table 1. Global youth initiative's stakeholders and research participants

Stakeholders	Alumni (former participating youths)	National Youth Organization
Australia	5	1
Fiji	4	1
Indonesia	3	-
Japan	5	1
New Zealand	5	1
Philippines	11	1
TOTAL	38	

### IV. DISCUSSION

#### A. Stakeholder Dynamics

##### a) Engagement: Stakeholder role and responsibility

Countries considered in this research project have established strong alumni networks and government organisations working closely with the main programme implementer – CAO of Japan. In the case of SWY, Australia, New Zealand and Fiji had the most number of times of participation among the countries in the Oceania region, while for SSEAYP, Philippines and Indonesia have since the beginning of the programme been part of the international exchange. These entities – herein considered as major stakeholders – have each identified their role relevant to programme implementation – from selection of participants; preparation of delegates, country program, and post-programme sessions. Alumni associations particularly extend the role of former participating youths through various post-programme initiatives. In terms of planning and evaluating the programme, the Japanese government with CENTERYE and IYEO largely manage and hold the responsibility with very minimal consultation and participation from stakeholders coming from participating countries.

Change in leadership in Japan's national government post has many times prejudiced the position of international youth exchanges in Japan. More recently in 2011, the shift of power from the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) to the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) resulted in a government screening committee decision to abolish the entire youth exchange programme (IYEO and CENTERYE). An all-important consideration per research participant, Yamazaki (SSEAYP,

Japan) was the question, "How voters (people) are thinking about the programme?" The funds for these programmes are coming from the people's tax, hence a critical deliberation from politicians as to how they can get votes from the people with this (youth exchange) kind of platform (Yamazaki, Japan).

Highlighted as a strength in the case of New Zealand was the internal agreement and understanding between the alumni association and MYD in their role for the country's implementation of SWY. Active involvement and the relationship between the alumni association and government ministries in the cases of Philippines, Fiji, Japan and New Zealand exemplify a good practice in terms of engaging stakeholders to contribute to the decision making and continuity of the programme. Former participating youths (for example Helen Clark, considered as SWY patron) regard their role as essential in ensuring that future young leaders will be able to benefit from the programme as well as in strengthening relationships among the countries involved.

The National Youth Commission (NYC) in the Philippines created a National Organising Committee to establish sub-stakeholder collaboration among various government agencies. Together with the SSEAYP alumni association, these agencies collaborate for promotional activities, regional selection and screening, pre-departure training and activities, country programme, homestay, institutional visits and local exchange. Reposar (SSEAYP alumna from the Philippines also working for NYC) recommends a consultative mechanism to introduce innovation and strategies if ESD is to be integrated in the programme. The presence of alumni within the government organisation running the programme is considered an advantage in sustaining the youth programme as in the cases of Fiji, Philippines and New Zealand.

##### b) Pluralistic nature of stakeholder relations

SWY and SSEAYP are international programmes which involve diverse cultures and participants coming from different parts of the world. The diversity in culture extends to differences in language, religion, education, social norms, traditions, etc. which are shared among stakeholders through this programme. Understanding diversity plays a significant part in the programme goals whereby participants are to understand cross-cultural implications and learn international relations while on board the ship.

The pluralistic nature of stakeholder relations built through the programme was noted by the participants as both a strength and challenge in the change agenda for sustainable development. While most the programme implementation decision-making emanates from the government of Japan, participating countries are given the leeway of implementing country-level programmes. This responsibility to decide on the country level of implementation influence, for example the quality of youth delegates to represent their country as observed by research participants from New Zealand and Australia in the case of SWY. Similarly, in the Philippines one notable observation from several research participants was about political manoeuvring (participants were selected based on political affiliations, preferences and influence with the selection committee) which affects the selection process, but is not entirely under the Japanese government control. A similar

issue which demands implementers' attention relates to uniformity and standardisation of country programme, especially homestay of participating youths in the case of SSEAYP. Although an isolated issue pertaining to a PY's harassment during a homestay was directly addressed once it was found out, such incident, per research participants could possibly be mitigated with stringent enforcement of guidelines for country programmes.

*c) Social interaction and network building*

Primarily geared for mutual understanding and friendships, the network formed amongst former participating youths is an excellent forum for sharing practices and learning from each other's experiences, individually or collectively as a nation. Both SWY and SSEAYP have, over the years, created manifold connections, not just among participants in a country or in a programme year (batch), but through alumni all over the world. The data from the interviews agreed that it is always easy to talk to people who have shared the same experiences, even if they are coming from different countries and different years of participation. The network and friendships, per Honda (SWY, Japan) have promoted peace and strong country relationships with countries which Japan was in the past at war with. Bao (SWY, Australia), Whitmore (SWY, New Zealand), and Rotuma (SWY, Fiji) all noted work-related benefits of the programme, mainly through the networks formed in SWY.

*d) Investment and social capital*

The Japanese government's massive monetary investment for more than half a century to the international youth exchange has imperceptibly developed leaders and community change-makers throughout the world. Although there are glaring contrasts among alumni profiles, the likes of Helen Clark (New Zealand), Sarah Spottiswood (Australia) and Anna Oposa (Philippines) – here mentioned through inset stories found in the individual cases in appendices B, C and D – are but a few of the empowered women who are changing the landscape of global development.

Moreover, there are examples of development happening at the grassroots (e.g. Fiji, Indonesia and Philippines) which are changing lives and improving conditions of communities through post-programme initiatives of SWY and SSEAYP alumni. Japan's IYEO-brainchild 'One More Child Goes to School' since 2008 continually assists children in Sri Lanka through scholarships and donation of school materials. In Fiji, SWY alumni assisted school children to continue with their education through their Japan-inspired project 'Another Child Goes to School'. There are countless unheralded stories of accomplishment behind the alumni (see inset stories on Appendices A, B, C, D, E, and F) of these programmes which per interview data, the government of Japan are grappling with in accounting for it as impact of its programme.

**B. Sustainable Development and its Complexities**

*a) Navigating SD dimensions through discussion topics*

People, planet and profit sum up the complexities embedded among the pillars of sustainable development. Although the overt objectives of the programmes do not relate to sustainable development, these dimensions are embedded among

discussion topics and seminars on board the ship. Discussion themes such as cross-cultural promotion, corporate social responsibility, environment (climate change, natural disaster reduction), food and nutrition education, health (HIV) education, international relations, school education, information and media, economy, volunteerism, youth development and sustainable lifestyle were introduced to participants. Young leaders are made to address issues relating to topics, first through discussion and sharing of ideas on board the ship then through actions after their journey. Discussion themes are rather sporadic in terms of achieving the full grasp of the core of SD and ESD, but MacDiarmid (SWY New Zealand) explained,

*Given that ESD is fundamentally about "doing" (i.e. finding real and practical solutions to improve quality of life, both now and the future), I feel that there could be a greater focus during the formal component of the SWY Program on increasing participants' capabilities for effecting change through action. Whether this is more sessions on developing 'action plans', or brainstorming solutions to real-world problems, or simulations...*

*b) Tipping point: Language, concept and context*

Communication themes such as language and context pertaining to SD cut across the research questions, as both were perceived as a strength, weakness, challenge, opportunity and a strategy. Language barrier was a problematic area challenging discussion and conversations on board. The diversity of languages spoken by participating youths complicated complex topics such as corporate social responsibility, cross-cultural communication and sustainable development. On the other hand, participating youths saw the advantage of learning different languages as being beneficial for work-related and future networking with global counterparts, in say, business and politics. The goal of achieving mutual understanding addresses these complexities, as participating youths considered it as an opportunity and strategy to re-contextualise concepts in a narrowed and agreeable form (Inyang, Schwarz and Mbamalu, 2009).

*c) Participants' moving from awareness to action*

Learning is transformative and empowering when participating youths move from awareness to action. The ship youth programmes have mechanisms to ensure that participants when they return home after the programme can implement post-programme activities underpinned by lessons learned during their two months of international exchange. Currently, for SSEAYP, PPA has become mandatory for PYs to work for a project within three years after their ship experience. The SSEAYP International (the over-all alumni association for 10

ASEAN countries and Japan) also hosts social contribution activities once every year during its SSEAYP International General Assembly (SIGA) in a community within the country sponsoring the event. SWY countries, through their annual reports also highlighted individual and collective actions that replicate their on-board experiences.

*d) Sustainable future: Youths' interest, commitment and vision*

Behavioural change remains indispensable and fundamentally underpins sustainable action. Participants from Japan, Indonesia, New Zealand and Philippines indicated behavioural configurations such as interest and commitment as underlying weakness of the programme, as well as a challenge for integrating concepts like sustainable development. There are several participating youths (as observed by research key informants) who, while in the programme, wrestle with sustaining interest and commitment to activities, and are mainly disillusioned with vague conceptions (discussions not matching PPAs) and sometimes rigid enforcement of Japanese rules and regulations. Clarity of programme goals and tighter links as to how they are achieved through various activities on board the ship is deficient (Keung, SWY New Zealand). The programme being entirely free for overseas participants influenced the level of motivation, as well as commitment among participants in the opinion of SWY participating youths from Fiji, New Zealand and Australia in taking actions after the programme. Research participants from Japan declared the vitality of sharing a vision; not only among participants, but also among other stakeholders (e.g. Ministries within Japan) to appreciate value of youth development efforts, no matter how fragmented dimensions of sustainable development.

*e) Sustainability reporting: standards, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms*

The ship youth programmes cover a vast scope spanning across regions of the world. This study endeavoured to understand the complexities of stakeholder perspectives encompassing the diverse Asia-Pacific region, which presents challenges in measuring the regional impact of both SWY and SSEAYP. Research key informants from New Zealand, Philippines and Indonesia noted management issues ranging from absence of guidelines and standardised programme of implementation (participating country level) to inadequacies in monitoring and evaluating the programme (more importantly post-programme activities). The Council of Presidents (COP) of SSEAYP has attempted to draft uniform guidelines that will facilitate programme implementation at the country level to mitigate issues such as discomfort of PYs during homestay (Reposar, SSEAYP Philippines). With mounting emerging community projects through PPAs, Pranowo (SSEAYP Indonesia) asked "How do we make it more meaningful to Japan and ASEAN?"

In summary, sustainable development themes are tacitly embedded in both on-board-the-ship discussions (informal social learning) as well as in post-programme activities (initiatives for taking actions) undertaken by participating youths of SWY and SSEAYP. Language barriers and complexities of the term sustainable development complicate

understanding and communication among stakeholders, however diversity also presents an advantage especially with the programmes' goal in achieving mutual understanding and friendship. Learning is coupled with behavioural change leading to, and building action competence through PPAs thus contributing to global youth development. Programme management, however was viewed a grey area of both SWY and SSEAYP especially if it is to integrate ESD and move towards sustainability. The next section will now discuss some of the issues relevant to perceived challenges and opportunities if education for sustainability will be incorporated in to the programmes.

*C. Stakeholder Approach*

*1) Issues of responsibility, politics and management*

The stakeholder concept is integral to many proposed resolutions to difficulties besetting organisations (Bussy & Kelly, 2010; Colins & Kearins, 2010; Collins, Kearins & Roper, 2005) as it extends past traditional management practices. The concept includes responsibility accorded to and expected from groups or individuals that are affected and/or have benefitted from the organisation's activity. Shared responsibility among participating countries and organisations involved in the implementation is one advantage and asset of the SWY and SSEAYP, owing to its longevity as a youth programme that is uniquely run through and within the confines of a massive vessel sailing the oceans of the world. Research participants however, noted a limited involvement of other stakeholders in terms of the over-all decision making process, as when they say that it is "heavily run by the Japanese government," thus limiting their capacity to contribute to programmes' holistic development, and in addressing sustainability issues (e.g. discontinuity due to financial difficulties) of the programme. A proposal to integrate ESD will be met with similar challenge of being able to participate in the high-level decision making for SWY and SSEAYP.

Mitchell, Agle, and Wood (1997) proposed three variables as power, legitimacy and urgency in their management theory on stakeholder identification and salience (TSIS). Accordingly, Bussy and Kelly (2010) in their interviews with politicians and political advisers in Western Australia, found that there was word missing in politics; legitimacy is the most important variable in stakeholder identification, while power is crucial to understanding stakeholder salience. They concluded by saying that managing stakeholder relationships "is, or should be the core business of public relations, whether in business, politics or other organisational settings" (Bussy and Kelly, 2010).

The case stories of New Zealand, Fiji and Philippines have shown the critical role of relationships fostered by government entities and alumni associations in ensuring that the ship youth programmes are implemented. Apart from external governments and alumni of the programme, the people of Japan have a huge say on the continuity of the international youth exchanges, as SWY and SSEAYP has endured more than half a century, mainly relying on people's taxes; hence a critical deliberation from politicians as to how they can get votes from the people with this (youth exchange) kind of platform (Yamazaki, Japan). Such instances emphasise power conferred

and/or shared among people and leaders of Japan as well as legitimacy of external entities in the attainment of goals set for the ship youth programmes.

### 2) *Issues of diversity and complexity*

When organisations are required to work collaboratively, there is a need for integration and systematic project management (Morris, 1994). The complexity of change can be measured by the number of stakeholders involved and the required interaction and co-ordination between them (Peltokorpi, Alho, Kujala, Aitamurto, & Parvinen, 2008). About 24 countries in the Asia-Pacific region alone, and over 70 nations all over the world, participating in the ship youth programmes present an enormous diversity of cultures and a specific set of management styles. As stakeholders increase there are more competing values and goals, which complicate the programme implementation. Through the years, the operation of the ship youth programmes has entailed growing interaction among stakeholders, and has come to terms with embracing and celebrating diversity. This growth requires new information channels and informal networks which hopefully will recognise participating countries in the major decision and policy making for the benefit of the programme, and force stakeholders to consider organization activities from a more comprehensive point-of-view (Peltokorpi, et al, 2008).

The ship youth programmes operate in a pluralistic context (Jean-Louis, Langley, Rouleau, 2007), as having several objectives (from as broad as mutual understanding and friendships which to a certain extent encompass youth development, regional peace and progress, etc.), diffuse power (from Japan and organisations within to countries and external organisations involve), and knowledge-based work processes (as it is training ground for young global leaders). This plurality complicates decision making however aids implementing organisations in being able to pool resources and ideas beyond Japan. Research participants understood that it is imperative to consider the consent and cooperation of multiple stakeholders and recognise conflict to lessen impending clashes and increase management efficiency (Jarzabkowski & Fenton, 2006, Pluralist theory). The pluralistic context thus embraces the value of diversity among cooperating and conflicting stakeholders.

### 3) *Issues of relation and contribution*

Improving international relations; inter-organisational coordination and fostering systems change, in Nowell's (2009) study showed outcomes relative to effectiveness that were adopted from a network approach and explored through the importance of "dense networks of cooperative relationships from among members of interorganizational collaboratives." In addressing global social issues through meaningful exchange and network development on board the ship, demands for greater cooperation and collaboration among communities in the Asia-Pacific region had been emphasised. Evident among various sharing of both practices and experiences, extending even after years of the programme conclusion, is remarkably potent, which could spur the demand for comprehensive participation and inclusion of alumni and government entities from participating countries to contribute to the over-all

development of SWY and SSEAYP. With the primary goal of better international relations, ship youth programmes almost seem to claim their contribution to achieving world peace; notably for the absence of war (in the proportions of Second World War) which is profoundly Japan's covenant to the world through these international youth exchanges.

### 4) *Issues on investment and impact*

Former participating youth are believed to have created a positive impression in society through collective actions and formed social networks, which help in community development. The concept of social capital herein represented through positive values in respect to development and voluntary associations of young leaders contributing to their respective communities expressed the essence of communal vitality (Siisiainen, 2000). Putnam's (1995) concept of voluntary association relates to the American theory of pluralism wherein such ideas influence social interaction and cooperation among various stakeholders. The impact of SWY and SSEAYP are ostensibly unbeknownst to the government of Japan and its people. Dearth in measurement tools for identifying impact of the programme often lead to having the programme threatened with abolition. Recently, the introduction of a three-year phase of PPA for SSEAYP alumni hopes to size up the contributions that these programmes are creating to wider global society. Investments of Japan in youth development are slowly paying off, as these young leaders comprise the voluntary association and thus social capital. Small community development projects through stakeholder's PPA are but building blocks to the attainment of larger regional goals (regional development, peace and progress), thus the imperative to move informal discussions and conversations on board the ship to social learning for sustainable development.

## D. *Social learning and education for sustainability*

### 1) *Issues on communication and complexity of concepts*

Education for sustainable development is multi-faceted let alone sustainable development which has hundreds of proposed definitions (Shao, Li, Tang, 2011), and is "considered vague, pluralistic, grounded in different value systems and incommensurate paradigms" (Osorio, Lobato, Castillo, 2005; Clifton & Amran, 2010 p. 122). Contextualisation and/or conceptualisation in communicating ESD will initially challenge institutions hoping to incorporate ESD. Diversity of culture (including language, socio-economic, technology, traditions, etc.) manifests dynamic tensions as it is typified as strength, weakness, challenge and opportunity if education for sustainability is to be incorporated into the ship youth programmes. This multiplicity of cultures further exacerbates the complexities in understanding ambiguity of SD concepts.

Research participants also considered the level of acceptability of the Japanese government in having ESD implemented into the programme. However, Japan being one of the initiators of the declaration of UNDESD in 2002, should place the country in a better position to integrate ESD into not just the formal education institutions, but also into informal learning such as SWY and SSEAYP, considering the amount of money invested every year. The ship youth programmes of

Japan are also believed to be one appropriate forum to introduce ESD, as youths coming from different backgrounds could contribute through meaningful conversations and discussions in the re-contextualisation of these concepts.

### 2) *Issues of awareness, practice and relevance*

Chapter 36 of *Agenda 21* identified four major goals to begin the work for ESD, i.e. improve basic education; reorient existing education to address sustainable development; develop public understanding and awareness, and training. The last two priorities underpin learning and education in the informal and non-formal learning environment. The ESD toolkit explains how programme goals can be achieved through a public that is aware of and informed about resource management decisions. Training strengthens the inclusive nature of ESD as business, industry, higher education governments, nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), and community organisation are encouraged to train their leaders, and to extend such training to their constituents (ESD Toolkit, 2002). Participants of this research expressed reservations as to the relevance of sustainability, sustainable development and ESD concepts to the ship youth programmes. They too are quite unaware of the social, cultural, environmental and even economic contributions of the programme, as evidenced by their uncertainty. This reflects a lack of awareness about the vitality of SD and sustainability and its relevance to issues such as poverty; gender equity and equality, and climate change among others (ESD toolkit) which are overtly discussed as part of the programmes activity on board. Lack of interest and commitment among the participants is fuelled by a rather disconnect in the programme goals and structure, hence the need to recalibrate such goals and formulate vision for the programme. The SWY and SSEAYP are training grounds for young leaders and are deemed to contribute to societal transformation through knowledge, skills, perspectives and values, allowing them to move from awareness to action towards their community and nation.

### 3) *Issues about taking and sustaining actions*

Jensen and Schnack (1997) made it clear that the aim of environmental education is to make students capable of acting both on societal and personal levels. They distinguish action competence (from 'activity' and 'behavioural change') as the ability to act, and identified four aspects, such as *knowledge and insight of the environmental problem; commitment to solve the problem; a vision of the future without the problem, and action experience to draw upon* (Jensen and Schnack, 1997). The Ministry of Education (2009) identified six aspects and framework for students developing action competence through research, in New Zealand schools to include: *experience, reflection, knowledge; vision for a sustainable future, and action-taking for sustainability and connectedness*. This goes beyond behavioural modification, where students are expected to act in a democratic and participative manner whilst involving themselves and others in taking actions and counter-actions for a more humane world (Schnack, 1997).

PPAs, both individual and collective are models of taking actions. Youth leaders of their communities espoused projects from learned concepts, coupled with issues identified during the discussion and experiences on board the ship, to benefit the

communities they belong to. Aspects of action competence from Jensen and Schnack (1997) and Eames et al (2006) include: *experience, knowledge, connectedness, action taking, vision, reflection and commitment*. These aspects are evident, and although youth actions from post-programme activities do not assume precise qualities befitting action competence, they are however likely to encompass movement from awareness and behavioural change to taking actions sustainably. Because of the shared goals and activities of participating youths, beginning with conception of a PPA on board the ship, to the delivery of projects to the community, taking actions in this sense typifies both direct (*actions which directly contribute to solving the environmental problem that is being worked on*) and indirect (*actions whose purpose is to influence others to do something to contribute to solving the environmental problem in question*) nature of action competence (Jensen and Schnack, 1997).

A strong value base, per Parliamentary Commission for the Environment (2004) is one key principle for education for sustainability, wherein value saturates human experiences and becomes the heart of everything a person does. Values such as compassion, equity, justice, peace, cultural sensitivity, respect for the environment and recognition of the rights of the future generations are but some that are indispensable in achieving a sustainable future (PCE, 2004). Having such values embedded in the participants' cognitive appreciation of sustainability contributes to a sustained action competence. The ship youth programmes train young global leaders who have the potential to create lasting change. Such is the kind of change which can embody action competence when youths undertake commitment along with experience, knowledge, vision, action-taking and connectedness.

### *E. Education for sustainability integration: Implications, recommendation for further actions and research*

#### *1) Increasing awareness through an ESD curriculum and relevant practice*

Streamlining programme goals and structure by embedding sustainability summed up research participants' recommendations to incorporate ESD into the ship youth programmes. Consequently, this will result in targeted PPAs and application of relevant practice once the PYs return to their home countries. Some interviewees discussed their desire to give back, owing to the many benefits gained from the programme (e.g. cross-cultural understanding, friendships, leadership skills) which heightened their awareness as to better cognition of diversity, and as to how mutual understanding can play an important role in international relations. If the ship youth programmes are to assume a role as an educational community for global young leaders, they could cooperatively work with formal education institutions in implementing ESD curriculum and practices. A non-formal learning set up, such as SWY and SSEAYP, as highlighted in the ESD toolkit (2002) could potentially aid in the lifelong process of learning, embellished in formal education systems to accomplish sustainability goals. A closer look and further investigation may aid in the development of action competence through the lens of informal social learning as objectified in SWY and SSEAYP.

2) *Valuing stakeholder dynamics*

The UNDESD enjoined stakeholders from across all sectors of the global community to strengthen collaboration to achieve the goals set for the decade (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa & United Nations Programme on Youth, n.d.). An analysis of the drivers and barriers affecting ESD implementation revealed activities which can decisively aid collaboration as *ESD networking, involving NGOs and development partners to integrate ESD; implementing ESD policies through scientific communities, and engaging the commitment, solidarity and potential of youth* (Gross and Nakayama, 2010). The ship youth programmes are well within these collaboration strategies, although they may need to assume inclusivity in the over-all implementation to include stakeholders from participating countries. In thinking about stakeholder, I propose an extension and perhaps a movement from its definition as *entities that can affect, or is affected by the achievement of the organisation's objectives* (Freeman, 1984) to dynamic partners contributing (through the impact created upon them) to organisational, societal and regional development – a seemingly compelling move towards *shared stakeholder responsibility*. The impact of the ship youth programmes through learning and taking actions, concur with UNEP and UNESCO statements pertaining to the importance and increasing demand of/in capitalising on youth and in their potential in advancing sustainable future.

3) *Assessment mechanism, redesigning goals*

The lack of key performance indicators and documentation was considered as one of the perceived weaknesses of the ship youth programmes. This signifies a lack of communication and inclusion of stakeholders in the initial (planning, goal setting, visioning) and final stages (monitoring, evaluating, planning because of the two) of the implementation of SWY and SSEAYP. Stakeholders are mainly involved in the actual programme implementation. Whilst alumni and implementing organisations in Japan have their own monitoring and evaluation procedures, these require critical consideration of perhaps an external assessor far removed from bias and internal pressures. To be holistic, the rigors of monitoring and evaluation should meet the programme goals and structures, and be well-aligned with a common vision. A recommendation to create an online portal where stakeholders from around the world will have the opportunity to access, share and thereby learn from each other's' projects can potentially aid in the mechanism to monitor and measure sustainability and ESD implementation.

4) *Creating meaning from experience*

Life-changing experiences on a cruise ship with some of the potential global young leaders sets SWY and SSEAYP apart from other youth development programmes all over the world. The length of the programme; intensity of activities on board; diversity of culture, and seemingly endless sharing and exchange of ideas, perspectives, knowledge and practice present opportunities to take advantage on youth development as a platform for co-creations toward global solutions, from local to greater community actions. The variety of

post-programme activities and social contribution activities spearheaded by the youths themselves are vessels of relevant (if not best) practice in achieving sustainability, and/or in the practice of action competence.

Table 2. Identified themes from strengths, weaknesses, challenges, opportunities of ship youth program and strategies for ES integration

Super ordinate themes	Sub themes	Arising from
<b>Stakeholder dynamics</b>	<i>Engagement: Stakeholder role and responsibility</i>	sharing responsibility through MOU, understanding politics and influences, people of Japan
	<i>Diversity among stakeholders</i>	addressing diversity among participants and stakeholders
	<i>Social interaction and network building</i>	international relations, friendships and mutual understanding, sharing, co-creation, co-learning
	<i>Investment and social capital</i>	global youth leaders, community post-programme activities as social contribution
<b>SD complexities</b>	<i>Navigating SD dimensions through discussion topics</i>	discussion topics that relates to SD
	<i>Tipping point: Language, concept and context</i>	language barrier, diversity in culture and background; complex concepts
	<i>Moving from awareness to action</i>	post-program activities both individual and as a group
	<i>Sustainability reporting: standards, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms</i>	Need for monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, also key performance indicator
	<i>Sustainable future: Youths' interest, commitment and vision</i>	lack of interest, commitment and discipline, vision
<b>Strategies for ESD</b>	<i>Facilitating learning</i>	include ESD in the itinerary of the program, alignment of activities
	<i>Valuing stakeholder dynamics</i>	include other countries in the planning, monitoring and evaluation
	<i>Assessments</i>	need for key performance indicator and mechanisms to monitor and evaluate
	<i>Sharing sustainable practices, communicating success</i>	documenting practice (best/relevant) for mutual, institutionalising PPAs, social contribution activities
	<i>Investing on youth towards a sustainable future</i>	Youth as social capital through networks, friendships, mutual understanding, regional peace and development

5) *Movement: global young leaders toward sustainable future*

The programme never claimed its longevity, breadth and depth of impact as merits to a sustainable practice in terms of programme implementation. It has not assumed responsibility for the development of global and empowered leaders from



their alumni, such as Helen Clark, Sarah Spottiswood and Anna Oposa (just to name a few, as there may be unnamed others whose leadership may have been attributed to the programme, but were not covered in this research). Perhaps it is high time to assume and claim such impacts on stakeholders to find its (programmes') meaning, substance and global influence, especially in understanding sustainability, sustainable development and its contribution to a sustainable future.

## V. CONCLUSION

Stakeholders of the global youth initiatives of Japan exemplified dynamic roles as well as shared responsibilities in the overall implementation of SWY and SSEAYP, especially if education for sustainability is to be incorporated into the program. The pluralistic nature of stakeholders is influenced by the diverse and complex nature of the countries involved in the program. The plurality is likely to complicate decision making however, such multiplicity has the potential to assist the program implementers in pooling resources and ideas beyond Japan. Stakeholder engagement in the case of youth development program like SWY and SSEAYP may well take social capital and social network as strength and opportunities for organizations to address challenges in managing stakeholders and consider them as partners in development rather than passive beneficiaries of the program. SSEAYP and SWY as global youth initiatives present an opportunity to shape sustainability policies in the ASEAN – Asia Pacific region, embrace concepts entrenched in sustainable development, and have an enormous potential to extend frameworks and aspects of action competence leading to education for a sustainable future.

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