

Examining the Potentials and Challenges of Grassroots Activism as a Pedagogy Framework for Implementing Inclusive Sustainable Development in Societies, Locally, Regionally and Globally

Research Representative: Associate Professor MAHICHI Faezeh

Summary of Research

Against the unprecedented socioeconomic and environmental issues of global-scale such as the COVID-19 pandemic and climate changes, we are facing today, ‘inclusive sustainable development’ is being promoted as a conceptual framework to help to envision and to achieve equitable, sustainable, livable, societies for all. To that end, the contributions of both leadership and education are pivotal. Higher education is called upon to lead in educating leaders who value inclusion and sustainability. In this regard, the Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) emphasizes local grassroots activism within communities and problem-solving learning through practical education, particularly, in a multicultural and intergenerational setting. Grassroots activism is a collective action of individuals who promote and take actions for a cause from the local level.

While grassroots activism covers a wide range of issues and is practiced in different forms, this research will focus upon environmental grassroots activism to demonstrate how such initiatives can serve as movements, which can educate, motivate and empower societal leaders in ways to integrate the values of inclusion and sustainability into all societal levels. In the proposed research, we will document the traits, behaviors, processes and actions of the Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University Environmental Activists (EA) in their collaborations with the ‘Grassroots Environmental Activists’ (GEA). The EA consist of APU students from different nationalities and cultures who have been involved in environmental conservation and cultural exchange activities. The GEA is a group of Beppu locals with diverse age and professional backgrounds. In particular, we will document and assess the factors that drive inclusivity and its impacts within and between the two groups. Through holding lectures, workshops, volunteering and cultural events and conducting extensive surveys and interviews we will investigate the impacts of grassroots activism on students from ‘inclusive leadership and sustainability perspectives’. Additionally, the proposed research was designed to identify the drivers, rewards, challenges, and barriers of practicing grassroots activism as a pedagogical tool to promote inclusive leadership and sustainability in a highly diverse setting such as the case of the collaboration between EA and GEA.

The findings of research will provide a deeper understanding and insights into the potentials of grassroots activism as a pedagogy tool for inclusive leadership and an inclusive approach to socio-environmental sustainability. Moreover, findings and lessons learned from the research will be utilized to integrate IL skills of collaborative conservation into APU’s “normal classroom” activities to provide students the motivation and commitment to apply them to real-world situations in their home countries.

Keywords: *Inclusive leadership, Development of Pedagogy, Education for Sustainable Development, Grassroots Activism, Environmental Conservation Events, Ecoliteracy, Service Learning, Volunteerism, Satoyama, Satoumi, Social Capital*