

The Sustainable Development Program with the Neoliberal Approach: A Reflection on The UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development

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ABSTRACT

In recent decades, addressing the environmental issues through deliberate educational interventions was optimistically seen by multiple actors, and has become a dominant discourse in current policy agendas. Since Education of Sustainable Development (ESD) is contextualized in the grand socio-political canvas, and certainly complicated in terms of its ways that came into existence and manner of expression. As we are half-way to approaching the education 2030 agenda, it's time for us to take a step back and re-examine the ideological and political drivers. This is an important step to reflect on where the path we embark on is leading us to.

This paper aims to uncover how the ESD was shaped by the logic of neoliberalism in the first place, and how this manifested in the contemporary sustainable development education program. Next, using a rhetorical analysis along with the Hyatt's Critical Discourse Policy Analysis Frame into the textual construction of The Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) initiative document, this article considers about how neoliberal beliefs are reversing as reasonable grounds for mainstream discourse of ESD. Ultimately, the paper argues neoliberalism has been embedded, normalized and hence concealed in the discourses and practices of sustainable development, as exemplified by DESD initiative.

Keywords: DESD; ESD; neoliberalism; sustainability citizenship

1. Introduction

The policy intensification of the concept of Education for Sustainable development (ESD) has been evident in the UN Conference on Environment and Development since 1992. As indicated in the Rio+20 Conference, education is key in 'improving the capacity' and 'raising environmental and ethical awareness', hence achieving the ultimate goal of sustainable development (UN, 1992). In both ethical and ecological concerns, the initiative asserted that education is critical for promoting sustainable development in the long term. In the Paris meeting that was held by The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in March 2000, the initiative was first formally materialized into an independent Earth Charter Commission. The initiative's goal was to build a 'just, sustainable and peaceful global society', while recognizing that the economic development, eradication of poverty and ecological protection are equally important and interdependent. Among the sixteen principles that were incorporated in the final document, environmental justice across generations was recapitulated, followed with the principle of 'integrate values into education', which is to make sustainability education available in the public domain, especially to the youth

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(UNESCO, 2000). Five years after the formal launch of the Earth Charter, The United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) from 2005 to 2014 was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) that aimed to ‘reorient education policy, practice and investment to address sustainability’ (UNESCO, 2011a). UNESCO was reaffirmed as the lead agency for the promotion of DESD, with the responsibility to coordinate the efforts of member states. An International Implementation Scheme (IIS) was developed accordingly, to facilitate the networking among stakeholders and provide holistic guidance to the successful implementation of DESD and under UNESCO’s leadership. The launch of DESD has thereby urged every member state to reshape its educational policies so that a sustainable framework can be built in a short span. Over the past 20 years, ESD has gradually been seen as a focal point for global policy interventions to achieve sustainability and future-oriented development in the long-term. The prevalence of ESD along with the emergence of DESD initiative emphasize the need to shift toward a more implicit normativity of global citizen education that based upon sustainability and ethical approaches. However, like other forms of education, the practice of ESD is barely able to escape questions of political economy in the broader sense. For instance, the moralities of ESD learning practices might be embodied in the personal consumption choice as a critical response to consumptive capitalism. The constraining regularities on individual subjects in the era of ecological modernization and neoliberalism, and gradually developed into a restricted form of curriculum that sought to transform sustainability issues into cultural and economic ones. While there is adequate research on what values should be developed as a result of the Decade, the critical discourse analysis of the initiative itself is still lacking. In this article, I hope to zoom into the language of DESD documents and the policy construction as well, to uncover the ideological and political drivers of the DESD initiative and ESD as a development advocacy. Discourse Analysis Frame (CPDAF) by Hyatt (2013) will be introduced as a powerful framework to engage in policy discourse analysis. It interrogates the ideological drivers and illustrates how neoliberal beliefs are reversing as reasonable grounds for mainstream discourse of ESD, as exemplified in the DESD initiative documents. Ultimately, I argue that neoliberal thinking of market-oriented commodification and individualism are integrated in the normative framework in contemporary sustainable development strategies, ESD in particular. It oriented the progress of DESD, whose ideological appropriateness was traceable in the DESD documents, thus further guide the stakeholders to present and practice the initiative in a politically acceptable way. The focus on the neoliberal policy landscape and its entanglement with the concept of ESD are intentional and considered to be relevant with the discussion about DESD initiative as well. This paper hopes to make an original contribution to contemporary sustainable development studies as well as the ideological standpoints of ESD programs, particularly in terms of what interventions are made to connect the DESD initiative to the global discourse of sustainable development.

2. Neoliberalism in education

Neoliberalism, as described by David Harvey (2007), broadly means an alternative socio-economic agenda under the sign of the property rights and free-market economy, as a vigorous attempt to shift the paradigm of interventionist political economy. It also means

the institutional rearrangements of every part of social structure, which substantially differs from the liberal structures. With the social democratic liberalism and economic theory of Keynes went downhill in the 1970s, neoliberal states and neoliberal governments emerged, as vision of competitive markets provide common good. The end of liberalism has led to elimination of tariffs, free-market capitalism and radical competition. Welfare is commodified, individual needs that used to be legitimized based on the principle of citizen rights are now met through buying services in the market (Connell, 2013). Commodification has come to the size of unimaginable, many public assets have been privatized in the civil society, including access to education. Scholars have argued that the neoliberal reforms have distorted social justice for knowledge and schooling and turned the education system into a profit-seeking sector in general (Baltodano, 2012; Hursh & Greenwood, 2015).

As the 'neoliberalism' became the dominate organizing framework in education, institutional sectors and their underpinning values are reconstructed the under the sway of marketization and individualization logic. Increasingly, educational institutions that previously regarded as essential to collective well-being, are re-defined as profit-making firms in a competitive industry. For the public educational institutions, the 'user charge' are introduced by the government, which altering the traditional fee-free paradigm, and preventing students from disadvantaged background from enrollment (Colclough, 1996). As the neoliberal view holds that the state-run education is inefficient and subpar in many ways, thus education system must be privatised to drive up the standards as well as the efficiency of the management (Starr, 2020). The neoliberal educational policy discourses and the market values that embedded have resulted the occurrence of two types of privatisations: endogenous (internal) of privatisations and exogenous (external) of privatisations under the banner of "educational system reform" (Ball and Youdell, 2007). Some aspects in the educational system have been transferred from the state and government to private companies. In particular, exogenous privatisation influences the education system exteriorly when a lot of educational services are outsourced from public institutions to private companies; the exogenous privatisation, on the other hands, refers to the privatisation from the inside of the education system with the introduction of free-market principles.

A sustained attempt to create highly vibrant and competitive market in education system has turned the public and private institutions into the 'service provider', striving against another or others for student enrollment and subsidies. In this way, performance management mechanisms were widely adopted in the evaluation and organization by both public and private institutions, to maximize the productivity and hence 'survive' in the fierce competition. The performance-related evaluation and the implementation of accountability measures has created a corporate "climate" in the organizational relations and human resources. These practices have re-orientated the values and priorities of educators, as school are urged to fit in the performance requirements. Starr (2020) has argued that educational policy in the neoliberal age has been appropriated to political level where the adjustment and modification to local context is no longer available. Accordingly, little authority and prerogatives has been left for teachers: the educators who work with students in everyday education realities. In addition to the reform on the 'supply-side' about how institutions responded to competitive environments, neoliberal policies of the

increased 'school selection' has also affected the 'demand-side' of educational marketplace. The neoliberal ideal has made parents as the 'consumer' who make individualized consumer decisions. The highest performing schools therefore are more 'accountable' in educating their children and thus more preferable in the enrollment choice (Rubin *et al.*, 2020). The neoliberal parents have the freedom of choice in school selection and greater bargaining power through contract. Generally, the increasing incentives for improvement, parental involvement and limited pedagogical autonomy of teachers that shaped by the neoliberal norms can have a series of consequences, including the continuous threats of lawsuits and legal litigations.

As free-market neoliberalism has infiltrated all the aspects of society throughout the developed world, policies, practices, and leadership (including those in the education sector) have adjusted in line with the neoliberal beliefs and given rise to a range of extreme inequalities. The fundamental questions such as 'where is education heading' and 'what should be the purpose of education' are behooved the educators and policy makers to ask. As previously mentioned, schools have been emphasizing on the science subjects to meet the needs of neoliberal capitalism and undervalue the arts subjects, which are crucial for training people capable of thinking about the world and society we lived. The critical understanding of the 'whole community' that seriously affected by neoliberal globalization is a central part of 'civic pedagogy' whereas the limited pedagogical diversity is now failing many citizens. Therefore, the issue of restoration of a 'civic pedagogy' come into starker relief as a fundamental way to shape the prospects of sustainable development, which is the concepts and consequences that the discussion now turns.

3. The concept of sustainable development and sustainable development education

As people have increasingly recognized that the effect of neoliberalism under the age of globalization are both positive and negative, backlashes have occurred, illustrating the dissatisfactions among many groups. In recent decades, variety of responses have aroused, that urge to reject globalization or defend the status quo. In the late 1990s, a wave of alter-globalization movements (or global justice movements) emerged, including indigenous movements, anti-privatization campaigns and climate change movements. Unlike the either/or responses, alter-globalization movements do not seek to endorse or end neoliberalism, but rather aim to solve the negative consequences of neoliberal globalization and further enhance global engagement on a basis of justice in social, economic, and environmental dimensions (Miller, 2018). The organized local and national protests seek to challenge the hegemony of neoliberal policies to varying aspects. In the spirit of alter-globalization, sustainable development and sustainability have become buzzwords in global political discourse. It appears that the initiative for sustainable development, such as ESD, was born as a useful instrument to approach environmental justice and seems to be consonant with alter-globalization views.

As suggested by the World Bank (2012), the link between neoliberalism and sustainable development was established in terms of the 'green growth' concept. To be more specific, 'economic sustainability', 'social sustainability' and 'environmental sustainability' are three pillars that undergird the grand sustainable development idea. Green infrastructure policies

would require specific and innovative financial tools, and the innovative private sector generates sustainable revenue that allows green growth to pay for itself. The overarching idea of the 'green growth' was prevalent in many development frameworks, as a precise instrumental framework that facilitated policy making. Similar terminologies including "market environmentalism" and "green neoliberalism" have all suggested a utopian win-win scenario that could achieve long-term development in the zeitgeist of capitalism. Despite promising in appearance, flaw of 'green growth' was evident in two ways: advocating the market efficiency in ecosystem service that is usually tagged with technological management techniques; and the uneven distribution of 'costs, benefits, and value' among social groups with different levels of privilege'(Roberts & Newell, 2017). Neoliberalism, with its focal point on market value, has encouraged a value-evaluation trend on every service, and 'ecosystem service' was one of the kinds. The market-oriented values that are promoted by neoliberalism and values that are based on the creation of sustainable societies collide, and conflict in many ways. Natural spaces and biodiversity are destroyed in the name of consumptions and economic production. As Sullivan (2009) has noted, there is an increasing amount of discourse that has conceptualized the ecosystem as an 'service provider' literally and figuratively, in which case nature can be reasonably exploited in the name of monetary returns and managed via technological techniques. The concept of sustainable development is constantly developing. It was developed from environmentalism, while adding economic growth as one of the pillars that allows economic growth to proceed in the name of sustainability. The United Nations Brundtland Commission (also known as the World Commission on Environment and Development) has characterized sustainable development as 'Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (Brundtland Commission, 1987). This definition emphasizes the need for intergenerational equity which should be embedded within a development regime. Relevant to this discussion is a call for the future-orientated ecological politics, policy makers and practitioners are expected to anticipate future ecological change with appropriate political guidance that will facilitate learning and adaptation in the modern context. Other than the previously mentioned belief that neoliberalism undermines education in general, scholars in the field of environmental education have stated that the general paradigms of environmental education have rooted in neoliberalism and can certainly be complicated when put into practice (Hursh *et al.*, 2015). Under neoliberalism, education was seen as a process of social reproduction to produce human capital. In ESD, sustainability citizenship was the aim. Human capital in this context is people who make individualistic consumptive activities that are aligned with moral righteousness, guided by the ideology of three-pillar model of sustainability at the same time. Scholars have coined the term 'ecopedagogy' as a critical theory of environment education and maintains a critical relationship to the ESD from anthropological perspectives as well. It describes the pedagogy that bears two-fold objectives: one is to embed the future-oriented ecological politics with the humanitarian aims that are set against the neoliberal erosion; the other is to produce all forms of ecological knowledge that are grounded in cultural context (Kahn, 2008). With regard to the UN Conference on Environment and Development, one of the ultimate aims that identified was to defend education as a fundamental human right to transform current patterns of neoliberal development and to attain the greater environmental and social

justice. In this case, ‘ecopedagogy’ alongside with a future-orientated ecological politics lie at the central place of the international initiative on ESD.

Generally, education in a form of knowledge production and legitimation widely seems to be the panacea for sustainable development. Since the Rio+20 Conference on sustainable development has proven to be unable to alter the global agenda on sustainability politics (Monbiot, 2012; Huckle and Wals, 2015), the proponents of DESD initiatives have strengthened their conviction on the feasibility and capability of the greening of capitalism. The belief that equipping all learners with sustainable development skills is key to the transition to greener economies and societies is precisely reflected in the trajectory of ESD. It is axiomatic that the implication of this belief is that a main reason for the process of sustainable development being stagnant is that citizens across the world are yet to be informed of the urge of green growth and motivated to adopt sustainable lifestyles.

The analytical framework: Critical Policy Discourse Analysis Frame (CPDAF)

The Critical Policy Discourse Analysis Frame (CPDAF) was proposed by Hyatt (2013) as a practical, diagnostic toolkit for doctoral students from across disciplines to engage in policy discourse analysis critically. The analytical frame is composed of two elements: the contextualisation of policy and deconstructing policy. The contextualisation element contains two parts: two parts: policy levers and drivers, as well as the warrant. As Hyatt (2013) suggested, analysts should recognize that policy is value-laden and context-dependent in the essence, hence, a policy-trajectory approach is necessary to be followed, in order to fully comprehend the evolution of a policy. The emphasis on context complexity and multidimensional nature of the policy resonates with Ball’s concept of the ‘policy trajectory’ (2006) as well as what Steer *et al.* (2007) has referred to as ‘policy levers’, which analysis requires the consideration of a wide range of factors in the political context and mediation within institutions. Government and its institutions in the neoliberal times intended to deliver a set of ‘arms-length’ regulations that entailed the involvement of multiple stakeholders to avoid direct governmental interventions, but also effective in terms of the implementation (Steer *et al.*, 2007). Accordingly, the contextualisation element is important, as the role of the UN and UNESCO have intensified, from promoting international cooperation to now with more responsibility for inspecting and regulating agencies. Although UNESCO and the UN don't have the legal mandate to determine the policy, they play a strong role in advising the policymakers about how to integrate ESD into education plans, and most importantly, monitoring the progress in the implementation. The UNESCO-supported educational programs are under close monitoring and evaluation process in accordance with its Education Sector Planning (ESP), for DESD, is the DESD Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) process in particular. Through these inspection processes and result-based management schemes, programmes are orientated during the course of DESD, and practitioners are required to take action at the planning level.

For the second part of the contextualisation element, ‘warrant’ is used to examine how the policy discourse bears reasonable grounds for the course of action in a rhetorical way. The concept of warrant is further spitted into three categories: evidentiary warrant, accountability warrant, and political warrant. All of them discursively constructed the

credibility and trustworthiness of the action. From the discourse theory perspective, policies are both developed and implemented within a discursive field, in which language is used tactically to make political sense. As is emphasised by Fairclough (2003), ideological context is seen as a modality of power that is revealed in the political texts, therefore the self-justification process of the texts is associated with the preceding modes of warrant. Fairclough (2003) has identified four modes of legitimations by which policies are justified in the discursive field: authorisation, rationalisation, moral evaluation as well as the mythopoesis or legitimation through narratives. To incorporate the legitimation mode into the DESD documents at a semantic and lexical level, the socio-political context of sustainable development education, especially focusing on the value system as well as the ideologies that were embedded in a particular course of action.

5. Venture financing in the context of sustainable model of post-war recovery and rebuilding in Ukraine

The First Global Report on DESD Monitoring and Education was released in 2009, as an important summarization of the Phase I of the DESD monitoring & evaluation process with a short history of the Decade and sustainable development provided. Throughout the document, there is a dominant narrative of accountability which highlights the key words of ‘sustainability’, ‘common good’ and ‘future’. In the textual level, the implementation of DESD was implicitly linked with the feasibility of ‘common good’ and sustainable future for all. The language in the documents also actively linked ‘education’ for the skills development for ‘green economy’ with the ‘three pillars of sustainable development’, as a key force to fix the cultural and ethical dimensions of global challenges and lead to the common good of humanity. Apparently, this discourse illustrates a great endeavor of building a common goal and shared understanding of ESD, whereas these common understanding was insufficient to related to real-world political economy. Framed rhetorically as a way of constructing an optimistic and ‘sustainable future’, a warrant of accountability was established in the wording, that also comprise the behavior modification towards sustainability, edging into the moral evaluation of the whole society at large. By doing this, along with the reiteration of the concept of ‘green economy’, the core purpose of ensuring all citizens have the right ‘skill’, ‘knowledge’, and ‘value’ to behave in a sustainable way was explicitly unveiled. However, participants of the DESD programs are given limited information on the into the structural causes of unsustainability, the global politics of sustainable development, as well as the radical alternatives, resulting in a weak specification on the political dimension. Moreover, the monitoring & evaluation report rationalises that the education about sustainable development will make certain a sustainable future which contextualises the objectives of the DESD documents to define how this education should look like. In the Phase II of the M&E process, an expert review of processes and learning to ‘identify the commonly accepted learning processes’ in the ESD-related projects and ‘make the DESD a success’ is published (UNESCO, 2011a). In this document, Dr. Tilbury has reviewed a range of cases and suggested that the ethical guidance is prone to vague on the practical level, as exemplified in the Japan case (UNESCO, 2011a, p.80- p.82). The inter-generational and intra-generational justice are seen as the pillar to ESD approaches by local organizers,

whereas little further guidance and referencing are provided on why and how the learning promoted and facilitate such a fairness. Given the complex nature of the concepts, ethical dimension is weak, especially when the reviewed cases have greatly emphasized on the role of personal empowerment and individualized mode of behavior in the building of social capital.

For those 'success stories', UNESCO has published a separate document to illuminate the apparent achievements they got since initiating DESD. It is pertinent to consider how the 'success stories' are used to establish evidentiary warrant to define the ideal outcome of education of sustainable development. While as indicated in *The First Global Report*, the ideal outcome of the initiative was three-fold: strengthen global capacity to provide appropriate sustainable development education, innovative teaching approach and awareness raising (UNESCO, 2009), other implicit goals of the initiative go beyond these three. In the *Success Stories* document, the discourse regarding the importance of universal coverage of DESD activities is prevalent, especially in terms of the number of schools which incorporated the ESD in the curricula as well as the training programs for ESD that launched across countries (UNESCO, 2011b). The massive coverage of the DESD programs is a guarantee of the 'successes' is multiple dimensions, the first is showing that ESD has become stronger component educational institutions at all levels, the second is to indicate a strong and effective partnership by stating striking numbers like '1,000 schools', '2,500 projects' and '400,000 young people'. Numbers and statistics have discursively constructed an evidentiary warrant that defines the "success stories" in terms of strong partnership and engagement rate among stakeholders, while blurring the respective roles and responsibilities of partners concurrently. As the document has suggested the countries have 'work together', and many young people have participated in the workshops, there is no information about the framework used for evaluating the learning experience of program participants, the reference to the program qualifications is also lacking, moreover, there is no interdepartmental governmental cooperation. Thus, the 'success stories' document has utilized a limited evidence base that defines the ideal outcome of education of sustainable development in the core of index growth.

In the spirit of ESD, a great portion of human rights is conceived to include the environmental awareness as DESD programs are devoted to enhancing 'capacity-building, participation and self-determination for sustainable development' (UNESCO, 2005, p.30). Virtually, the documents are discursively constructed in a feasible and optimistic way, where visions of the sustainable future and quality global education have been co-constructed. Within the Hyatt's (2013) framework, this reiteration of individualism is justified by attaching to dominant norms (legitimation is discursively accomplished in the policy narration), and in this case, the value attached is the individualism. This kind of language rationalises the prioritising of 'individual responsibility' in the textual level, and therefore constructs a particular set of standards to define the 'individual responsibility' in terms of the social actions, economic behavior, as well as the environmental practices. In terms of this implementation of individual approaches to decarbonization, the notion of 'personal carbon footprint' that coined by Wackernagel was widely appeared as a tool for education (Wackernagel and Galli, 2007). In this regard, the UNESCO has proposed a specific DESD program called Ecological Footprint at School to encourage the 'pro-sustainability' psyche and behavior for students, teachers, and managers. According to its

guidance document: Getting Climate-Ready- A Guide for Schools on Climate Action, the 'reduce the school's ecological footprint' requires not only the individual actions, but also the collective endeavor of students, teachers, staffs and managers, or the 'whole-school approaches to climate change' to build the 'school cultural of sustainability' (UNESCO, 2016, p.3-p.4). Users (schools/institutions) are highly encouraged to reflect on their individual mode of behavior via the concept of 'carbon footprint' (UNESCO, 2016, p.9). As far as the notion itself is concerned, some scholars believed that by the term 'personal carbon footprint' was greatly adopted by industrial polluters to diffuse the emission responsibilities, also this 'tool' does not really explain where and how the consequences really occurred on structural and institutional level (Brownstein *et al.*, 2022). Building on the discourses and the use of carbon footprint concept, a post-cosmopolitan form of ecological citizenship was created, sustainability is accomplished through informing citizens and facilitating a more 'pro-sustainability' behavior in their decision-making context. The DESD annual reports have claimed legitimacy of the 'pro-sustainability' behavior change on the basis of individualism. Without further exploration and referencing, the DESD has delivered limited realistic guidance in understanding global politics in sustainable development, the power of particular person or a particular group of people is discursively manifested. Arguable, the concept of 'personal carbon footprint' and reiteration of individual choices in DESD programs have placed much emphasis on the individual moral level through attaching to dominant norms, and remain vague about on structural and political level.

6. Discussion

The above analysis has revealed how the political version of 'sustainable future', 'successful' regional practitioners and 'successful' SD learns was constructed through the discourses of accountability. In the vein of Fairclough (2003)'s account on the modes of legitimations and Ball's concept of the 'policy trajectory' (2006), I argue that DESD initiative has nominally put forward a path for personal behavior social and psyche correction to the 'sustainable future' on the ethical dimension but give little attention to the existing barriers to change under the prevailing paradigm on the political dimension. On the ethical level, the DESD literature has an ideological emphasis on individual responsibility and ecological citizenship, which coincide with neoliberal belief. Building on the rhetoric of neoliberalism, individualism with its tenets of 'choice' and 'personal responsibility' help to support the belief that individuals can practice maximum freedom and take full responsibility for their choice as long as they are productive enough to remain independent. In this way, any form of ignorance or dependency will be negatively characterized by the social norm. Individuals are put in the institutional hierarchy to alter the eco-social crisis. Such sentiments have been strongly echoed in the DESD document, a prominent link between ethics and citizenship was established as seen in its accountability warrant and evidentiary warrant, thus reducing the concept of sustainable development from political level to the personal level. Bullen and Whitehead (2005) have seen this post-industrial and post-cosmopolitan paradigm of ecological citizenship as an epistemological challenge to modern forms of citizenship. The trans-spatio-temporal qualities of ecological citizenship are destructive to the material basis of modern forms of citizenship, leading to

unsolved questions about the material constitution of the citizenship. Barry (2013) also expressed concern that establishing this modern system of 'green republicanism' might trigger the undemocratic consequences as it could turn sustainability service into compulsory work that is enforced by state or moral constraints. In the DESD context, we need to recognize that the purpose of creating ecological citizenship in ESD practices have served the need of human capital development in the humanist and conservative sense. Furthermore, failure of recognizing the limitations and fallibility of people's perception when acting as a completely rational agent has collided with Foucault (1982)'s concept of 'governmentality'. By 'governmentality', Foucault means the 'art' of governmental controlling through a set of self-empowering techniques on its citizens, including self-actualization and autonomy on their modes of action. In the neoliberal mode of governance, new moralities and behavior constraints are created, leading to a new notion of 'common good'. Governmentality can be seen as the political facet of neoliberalism. This facet of neoliberal ideology asserts that people are inherently governmental and programmable (Davies & Bansel, 2007; Kaščák & Pupala, 2011). It is in line with the ESD discourse which narrates people as trainable to know how to nourish and protect the market of environment and society. Individuals were described to be completely rational in making decisions that drive sustainability, institutional power was put in a position of regulation and enforcement, eliminating the public ignorance that drives to unsustainability.

On the political level, despite the broad in scope of the Decade, some suggested that the sustainability issues were still remained somewhat marginal in schools. When it comes to the specific initiatives, the educational purposes are remaining unclarified due to the great independency of the autonomous educational institutions as well as the limited realistic guidance in understanding global politics in DESD programs. This is also one of the expected consequences of the martialized educational policies and increased accountability measures coming afterwards. In the UK context, the main vehicle for ESD was the Eco-Schools, as indicated in The First Global Report of DESD, the practice in ESD in schools in England was largely promoted in the governmental level. Whereas based upon the assessment of curriculum guidance and resources, it was found that the ESD courses was regarded as low priority, and the financial support from the corporate was a key part of funding (Firth and Smith, 2013). As we have identified earlier in deconstructing the DESD documents, the guidance on ESD practices has insufficiently engaged with sustainability issues on on the political accounts, not to mention the intercultural dialogue among multiple cultural groups on alternative meanings of sustainable development, the question of 'what should be the purpose of (sustainable development) education' thus reoccurred in the neoliberal scenario. In practice, sustainable-related knowledge is inherently plural, and the idea of sustainable development is not limited to environmentalism and economic growth.-Gender, health, multiculturalism and other and other 'adjectival' educations are yet to be included in ESD. While DESD literature has pressed on quantities of strong partnership and engagement rate, the quality and plural nature of ESD was underdiscussed. Referring back to CPDAF, disregarding the complexities in the SD knowledge itself and acquiring the process of it has emphasized what is 'success' in the DESD literature, and failure of fitting the descriptors is discursively positioned as the opposite of 'success'. One of the foreseeable results of the narrow-subjects discipline was the limiting understanding

of ESD and inability of seeing the ‘big picture’ on the emergence properties on sustainable development for both students and educators. Some scholars have suggested that we are living in the ‘agnotology’ or the age of deliberate, culturally induced ignorance, thus, the educators and teachers need to be fully comprehended the power of ignorance and develop their own understanding within the sociology of knowledge, to construct the anti-force of ignorance to escape from the ignorance (Proctor and Schiebinger, 2008). Similarly, when ESD educators trying to deliver the ‘common knowledge’ of sustainability, teacher’s training and continuing professional development opportunities what we need in the first place.

In general, we can now suggest that the ESD in the real-life practices should incorporate a broaden subjects on the issue of sustainability to anchor the root challenges in the political, governmental and institutional level of global political economy. It should be value orientated and skill-based, equipping all learners with the essential knowledge to reflect on the arguments from across the political and cultural spectrum. In this way, ESD is proximate to the connotation of ‘global citizenship education’(Bullen and Whitehead, 2005; Huckle, 2010) or ‘ecopedagogy’ (Kahn, 2008), combining the critical curriculum with the future-orientated ideas within democratic means. In addition to the individual display of ‘pro-sustainability’ actions, leaners of ‘ecopedagogy’ should be able to recognize false understandings in current norms and foster their own understanding to the ‘big picture’, ultimately, they will become the co-creator of sustainable politics (Bullen and Whitehead, 2005).

7. Conclusion

As the discourse analysis has revealed, the DESD documents have been discursively constructed from an ideological standpoint of hegemonic neoliberalism and environmental economics. In this article, I argue that DESD documents give little attention to the existing barriers to change under the prevailing paradigm of ‘how to pursue human well-being’ on the political, economic, and cultural accounts. As far as the ‘green consumerism’ and ‘awareness and behavior change’ are concerned, DESD has failed to relate the relentless material consumption to the structural factors within the modern capitalism that led to financial instability and social injustice. Yet we have been hard pressed to say how neoliberal beliefs are going to take effect through contemporary pro-environmental advocacy in general, by far it is clear that neoliberalism is embedded in the establishment of a new moral order of sustainable development education. The learners of the ESD program were regarded as capital for personal and social and economic development in the spirit of ‘green growth’, whose mentality were governable through sustainable knowledge construction and moral construction as well. It resulted in unbalanced power relations between the DESD practitioners and the receiving end of the initiative. Hence, it is important for practitioners of ESD to be aware of how neoliberal ideologies underpin the way we think, represent, converse and implement sustainable practices in social and environmental dimensions, and make educational practices more plural and socially inclusive accordingly.

The analysis of these DESD documents through the Hyatt’s (2013) framework suggested that the warrant of accountability was discursively adopted in constructing the wordings

such as ‘common good’ and ‘sustainable future’. In such as envision of ‘building the future we want’, personal empowerment and individualized mode of behavior was exaggerated emphasized as the focus of ‘change’. Also, the evidentiary warrant that defines the ‘success stories’ to reaffirm the hegemony on the DESD guidance. As such, the relationship between ethical duties, civic participation and underlying structural causes of the unsustainable problems is prone to vague, realistic guidance to counter hegemonic values embedded in neoliberalism, globalization and consumerism is rather weak. Besides, the new moralities and behavior constraints created in the DESD discourse. In this article, we view neoliberalism as a contemporary and parallel discourse about the politics of education, economy, and environment. DESD is a constructivist project. With ESD and its power manifested in DESD initiative, a unifying language in environmental policy was produced and carried over into the global sphere, leaving questions for an anthropology concerned. Who is creating the ESD discourse and for whom? What does the power distribution look like in the decision-making process? Emphasizing self-reliance, independence, rational-choice in the contemporary ESD discourse have been strongly echoed in the individualism facet of neoliberalism, and beyond educational concerns, we need to re-examine how neoliberalism have reversely impact on human connection and the connection to their environments. In general, ESD should be seen and developed into a more humane and non-commodified form of education that embraces the geographical and cultural complexities in the course of progress. The intention of this article therefore has been to uncover the underlying neoliberal discourse of sustainable and unsustainable development that was constructed in DESD literature, and hope to call for a more critical and politically engaged discussion into the role of education in the sustainable development regime. If contemporary ESD advocacy intends to make transformative change, then it will need to be re-oriented away from old paradigms of neoliberal discourses on education and worship of knowledge economy. One thing to note is that this paper does not seek to criticize education as a general means to promote sustainable development, but when it comes to specific solutions to sustainability, the efficiency of educational programs and mainstream ESD advocacy need to be re-evaluate in terms of educational relationships from a more learner-centered stance.

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