

Design for a Curriculum and Learning that "Digs into the Local Community and Connects with the World"

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The Development Education Curriculum Study Group instituted in the Development Education Association and Resource Center has taken the notion of "digging into the local community and connecting with the world" as a new perspective to frame the notion of a desirable curriculum, and to design a new learning based on that curriculum. The question to be examined here first of all, bearing in mind the movements in development education to date, is why the local community is specified.

Development education is an educational movement that aims to achieve understanding of problems with development, symbolized for example by poverty and north-south disparity, to reach solutions to those problems, and to realize a global society that enables fairness and coexistence. In Japan, it has been approximately 30 years since specific movements to development of such education emerged. A look back at those 30 years of growth in development education, at the level of actual practice, shows that a pace of progress so dizzying it could not have been foreseen took place at the beginning of the 1980s in relation to the popularization of the term and concept of development education and the development of educational methods and instructional materials for it. It has still been just 30 years, however, and it is also a fact that development education still has many issues remaining to be resolved. Reexamination of those issues from the perspective of the local community will raise points like the following.

First, development education to date has placed importance on aspects of the problems of development in developing countries and on a structural understanding of those problems. It has not, however, made a determined effort to delve into the economic disparity, the environmental destruction, the depopulation, and other problems of development of the local communities that are immediately present to the learners, nor to grasp those problems by drawing structural connections to problems in other regions of the world. Nor has adequate attention been given to the perspective that seeks to grapple with the resolution of those problems starting in the local community.

The second point arises when local problems of development are examined and a local society that allows fairness and harmonious coexistence is envisioned. In that case, the

important thing is the perspective that questions how the diversity of cultures in that local community (regionality, traditions, etc.) is understood, and asks further how those cultures are to be developed into a culture that promotes fairness and harmonious coexistence. However, adequate attention has not been given to this approach by development education.

The third point has to do with efforts to obtain perspectives on the 21st century that advocate sustainable development, the culture of peace⁽¹⁾ and other such values and visions of society that are more universal for human beings. Efforts are being made to put those into actual practice. In order for those values to develop into cultures that are modes of life or codes of conduct that are passed on, and that do so without remaining at the level of principles or information, they should become inextricably involved with the cooperative actions of people for whom those values are intimately bound to life in their various local communities. However, development education has not yet reached the point of adequately presenting the theories and concrete methods needed for that purpose.

The fourth point is related to international cooperation activities, which on paper solicit participation from the perspective of "relationships with a recognizable human face" and "cooperation as partners." Perhaps because these are lacking in the perspective of determined delving into the problems of development found right at home, however, these are one-directionally assistance-oriented, and development education has not yet reached the point of adequately presenting the perspective of cooperation in which common issues are dealt with by both sides acting as parties that have direct first-person involvement, nor the perspective of inter-local community cooperation that connects together one local community with another.

The fifth point has to do with how development education has been interconnected with local development programs that have been implemented to date as non-governmental education movements and educational activities in the various areas of Japan. In learning from those movements and coordinating with them, development education has not adequately adopted the perspective of mutual effort to advance education.

As indicated by the above, when development education as it has been to date is reconceived from the perspective of the local community and an attempt is made to describe what development education of the future will be like, then it becomes absolutely essential to engage in actual practice and to create theory that connects with the world by means of the local community as the axis of approach.

This is not to say, however, that development education as practiced to now has not discussed the local community at all. A reexamination of how the notion of the local developed in development education to date will show that, in many cases, education

toward a structural perception of problems of development that called urgently for solution, such as north-south problems and poverty as found in the developing countries, and toward participation in the resolution of such problems, was envisioned as being implemented in the local communities of Japan. That development education can be said to have placed value on approaches leading from the global to the local. Given the seriousness of the problems seen in the world, there is no doubt that this was an important approach for development education. There is the other approach, however, that goes from the local to the global—or in other words, "digs into the local and connects it to the world"—and education cannot be considered to have been at all adequate with regard to this approach. Perhaps there is a need to create an integrated relationship between the approach from the global to the local and that from the local to the global in which the two are mutually complementary.

Consequently, the present research on development education curricula is founded upon critical awareness of development education viewed from the above perspective of the local, and it takes into consideration the results achieved by curriculum research to date. With that, and learning from the actual practice in local communities, it attempts to present the perspective that is demanded for the creation of a new curriculum and the perspective that is demanded for a new notion of learning.

1. The local

The kind of critical awareness described above could aim to construct a development education that has practice and theory connecting to the world with the local as an axis of approach. If this is done, then the question is how the local would need to be understood. This is a good point at which to confirm the meaning of the local in development education.

The local community can be understood to mean a living space built up on a cooperative basis by residents who traditionally take their relationship to the place or their relationships by blood as their center. However, the local is a polysemic term, and it is also used sometimes to mean a definite societal space that is delineated in the way a government administrative district or school district is, as well as to mean outlying regions in contradistinction to the center, or the peripheral in contradistinction to the central. The expression "coordination between the school and the local community" indicates that the term is also used to point collectively to the individuals, groups, traditionally inherited culture, cultural heritage, environmental resources, and other such elements that surround the school.

The point is not to understand the local as a certain determinate space. It can also be

understood as something variable, that depends on the problems or issues involved. In other words, if the local community is to be understood as "a living space formed on the basis of cooperation among residents for the resolution of a specific problem or exploration of a specific issue," then as pointed out by Yuichi Moritomo in the following, the type of issues involved and the residents who are the main actors in them can be taken as the starting point, so that the scope of the local can be expanded and contracted at will. It is also possible to perceive the local community itself in a multi-layered manner.

The debate over how to define the scope of the local is decided on the basis of issues that should be reformed. In that sense, the scope of the local is elastic, and it would be appropriate to understand it by taking as a starting point the human groups of the people who are the main actors, and by viewing them as constituting multiple levels. The problem is not to demarcate the scope of the local. What is most important in grasping the local is the method of problematizing perception that wonders objectively how to reform the actual reality of the local community.⁽²⁾

This way of grasping the local is particularly important for development education and other education on the problem resolution pattern. That is because the local is a living space that enfolds politics, the economy, culture, the natural environment, and other such elements. Those elements are dynamically intertwined with one another in ways that go beyond the conventional, determinate local. In that context, for the purpose of examining the problems and the measures for resolving those problems that exist there, the perspective that takes the local in a manner more freely expandable and contractible, flexible, and multiply-layered, is important from the perspective of specificity in learning, as well as specificity in actions for resolution.

Take, for example, the 20th National Research Conference on Development Education held in Kyoto in August 2002. In the final plenary session, Hiroshi Kanda (who at that time was Secretary General of the People's Forum on Water) proposed the idea that local communities should be considered in units of watersheds, taking the circulation of water as the axis of approach. This is a specific instance of the local community being viewed in terms of issues that have water conditions and the water environment in mind.

2. Perspective of creation of a curriculum that "digs into the local and connects it to the world"

The Development Education Curriculum Study Group has discussed a curriculum that

incorporates the new perspective described as digging into the local and connecting it to the world. In that process, they proposed the following five perspectives for the creation of a new curriculum. These five perspectives also represent the structural incorporation of perspectives that would be considered of importance in the actual practice of ESD. In other words, as shown in Figure 3-1, while taking "<1> Digging into the local" as an axis of approach, the perspectives of "<2> Connecting up with people," "<3> Connecting up with history," and "<4> Connecting up with the world" interrelate one with the other and further indicate "<5> Participating," which leads to action. These are envisioned as forming a whole in which the parts circulate one through the other. These perspectives also fulfill the function of basic indicators when reading and explicating instances to date of practices, curricula, and other such matters in individual local communities, and when formulating new practices and curricula. Brief explanations of the several perspectives will be added below.

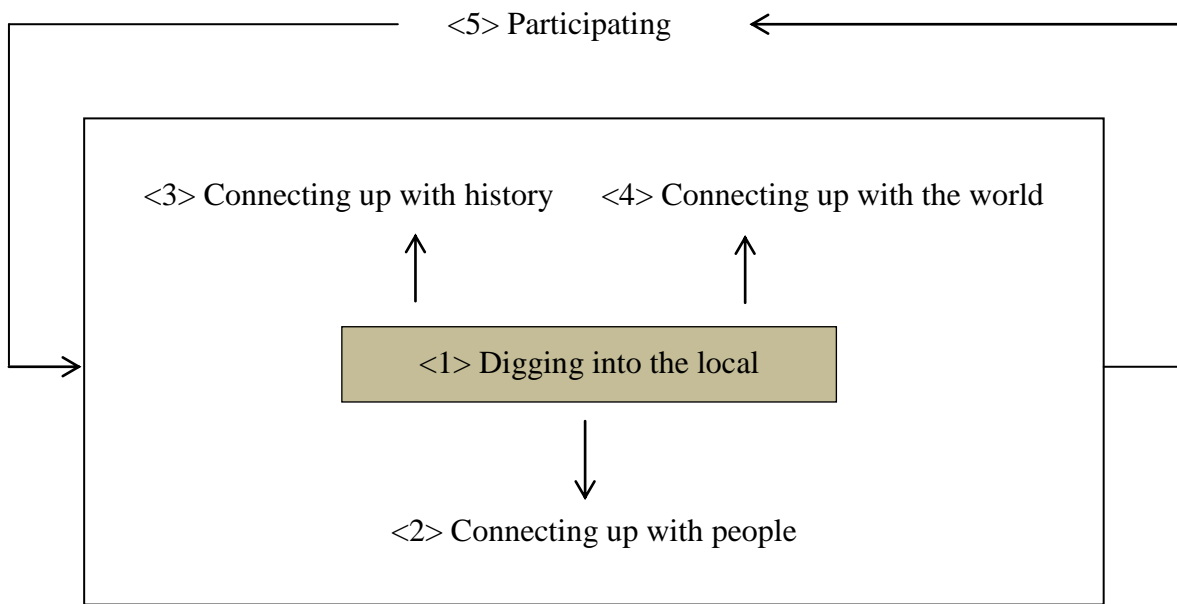


Figure 3-1. The perspective of creation of a curriculum that "digs into the local and connects it to the world"

(1) Digging into the local: Read and explicate the local community and clarify the issues

The questions of how to know and understand the current situation and status of issues in the local community, and how to clarify the issues that impinge on ESD, shape the key approaches to curriculum and practice. ESD points toward two perspectives for knowing and explicating the local state of affairs. They are environmental suitability

and social fairness. Koyu Furusawa cites two distinguishing characteristics of development patterns that are found in civilization on a 20th-century model and that should be reexamined. One is growth that expands without limit, the other is the tendency toward localized maldistribution of that growth and expansion in human society, and the two are interrelated.⁽³⁾ The current status of society today with regard to the former is that it exposes the increasing seriousness of environmental problems, the destruction of biological diversity, the depletion of resources, and other such environmental unsuitabilities. With regard to the latter, it points to conditions of increasing disparity and inequality and other such societal unfairness. When viewed at a world level, critical awareness appears to be gradually growing stronger with regard to both. With regard to environmental suitability, in particular, the numerical targets being defined at international conferences and other such resolution measures can be seen to be growing more specific. As to the status of social fairness problems, they are steadily growing more serious and measures to deal with them are inadequate, in part because they require approaches informed by ethics and values. Meanwhile, a look at the local community shows entirely too many problematic aspects, even within Japan, with expansion of disparities between localities and classes, impoverishment of primary industry, destruction of the environment, structures of discrimination and exclusionary consciousness regarding other ethnic groups and other cultures, gender discrimination, and so on. Another point is that those problems do not by any means exist solitarily. They are related one to another, and they exist in multilayered form. There is a need to look again from both perspectives at the current situation in the local community and at the status of problems in the local community, to read and explicate them in a multilayered manner at the level of the residents' lives, and to clarify the issues with a view to ESD.

(2) Connecting up with people: Give rise to cooperativeness

If, as discussed above, the local community is to be understood as "a living space formed on the basis of cooperation among residents for the resolution of a specific problem or exploration of a specific issue," then it becomes necessary to inquire into the person-to-person connections, the organization-to-organization connections, and the circumstances of cooperativeness seen there, approaching these matters along the axis of local problems and issues (the perspective of section (1) above). It is widely recognized that these connections are becoming tenuous and broken. In examining these connections, it can be borne in mind that the local community, as the definition indicates, gave rise to a cooperative quality among the residents in the course of the

pursuit of solutions to specific problems or exploration of specific issues, so that the connections and cooperative quality found here are not just formalities by any means. They are brought into being as a matter of necessity due to the issue involved. It is, therefore, important to ask what kind of cooperative quality will be brought into being in accordance with the various and diverse issues involved.

In considering the relationships this cooperativeness and these people have with social activities, it is effective to look at the relationships between the public, the communal, and the private as three sectors that make up society. In other words, society contains public activities that operate on the principle of the public good and that are primarily operated by government and other public administration; communal activities that operate on the principle of the common benefit and that are operated by a diversity of citizen's organizations and groups; and private activities that operate on the principle of private benefit and that are operated by enterprises and individual people. Problems are being identified now in terms of the destruction of local and regional society and the weakening of local ties because, in many cases, the public activities have frozen into rigidity and private activities have ballooned while communal activities are destroyed or weakened. The social activities of NPOs and NGOs, which are gaining new attention now as civic organizations, and the social service activities by corporations, can be taken as part of a movement that is truly communal in nature and that works toward a renaissance of the common good. The vitalization of the communal will cause new movement in the state of public and private activities as well as in the relationships of the three sectors.

There is a need to inquire into the connections from person to person and from organization to organization, as well as connections among public, communal, and private, that arise out of the issues involved in realizing ESD, and in so doing to give rise to a diversity of cooperativeness that arises out of necessity.

(3) Connecting up with history: Learn from the wisdom of those who went before and picture the future

The history of development in the modern period, and in the case of Japan, the time of the Meiji Period (1868-1912) and after, in particular, is not the history of development as it should have been in light of the word's meaning, to release from a sealed-in state. On the contrary, it can be said to have been directly connected to a history that caused destruction of local communities and gave rise to structures of domination and disparity. These structures are being still further amplified under advancing globalization. There is a need to understand the history of development at the national level and world level

critically in this way while reconceiving local problems and issues historically. The reason is that much of the wisdom accumulated through the problem-solving of people who went before as a long-term historical undertaking in local communities has been enfolded into culture (regionality, folkways, customs, etc.) as well as in food culture, traditional industries, and so on, which so often are and were alive in people's lives and livelihoods. Taking issues as axes of approach to learn once again from the forebears' wisdom that can be seen in the cultures of local communities, to draw images of a sustainable future, and to acquire a future orientation as part of oneself are basic and important matters for humans as historical beings. This is something of great significance in terms of rethinking school education and school culture, which even today tend to produce learning that is cut off from regionality, having been brought into the local community as a system from the outside in a form that is severed from traditional teachings and upbringing.

(4) Connecting up with the world: Resist globalization and coordinate with other local communities

Local problems and issues do not exist independent of the locality. They exist amid mutual interconnections with other localities. Moreover, the curriculum here is going from the local to the world; or in other words, taking the local community as the axis of approach to read and interpret the circumstances there and the status of the problem, in which the definition of the issues is informed by their inevitability. The curriculum, in that context, attaches importance to approaches that obtain a concrete and structural grasp of connections with other local communities. When the local community connects with the world, however, it may display a diversity of connections with other local communities that depend on the problems and issues the local community is undergoing, and the orientation of its solutions. In other words, it will display the state of its connections, which sometimes resist and sometimes cooperate one with the other. For example, the progress of globalization in the economy constitutes a worldwide push toward homogenizing and ranking based on the values of efficiency and competition. The liberalization of finance and the liberalization of multinational corporate activities is further enlarging the disparity between local communities that enjoy the benefits of such liberalization and those local communities that do not. Meanwhile, the movement to resist this globalization that is not sustainable and to work on creating sustainable societies based upon new values may not be large in scale, but it can be observed in a number of local communities.

The regional currencies that have been coming into being in every region of the world

over the past several years are one case in point. These regional currencies were created to be used by small groups in specific localities, but they are not money, so they are not subject to use for speculation or saving. They are used in exchanges for services relating to the environment, social welfare, education, and other specific themes, and for buying and selling goods. One of their distinctive characteristics is that they are used in direct, face-to-face relationships between people. The regional currency movement places value on local residents helping each other and supporting each other, even on a small scale, and one can imagine the possibility that this movement could provide a bond that ties together a single local collectivity.

Apart from regional currencies, attempts to build sustainable local communities based on new values can also be seen in the fair trade movement,⁽⁴⁾ community business program,⁽⁵⁾ and other such activities. Those attempts take the unique movements of each locality as their foundation even as they go on to connect with other localities and coordinate with one another, without stopping in one locality, and it can be envisioned that they would function to build up a new society that has sent its roots down in the local communities. The work of promoting ESD from within the local community will need to inquire into the kind of connections that should be formed with other local communities whether in Japan or in other countries.

(5) Participating: A multifaceted, multilayered understanding of participation

Participation is a key term in development education. Participation has been taken as a multifaceted activity to date, including participation in the learning process, participation in problem solving, and participation in community building. The point that should be considered carefully here is that, just as local communities and local issues are perceived as multilayered, so also participation is perceived as multilayered. Considering, for example, that a regional society contains the elements of politics, the economy, and culture within itself, then participation in society will mean political participation, economic participation, and cultural participation. The societal activities that are subject to participation can be partitioned, as pointed out in connection with <2> Linking up with people, into the three sectors of public, communal, and private. In this case, participation emerges in the form of activities in public, communal, and private sectors. Moreover, it has been pointed out in the debate over citizenship that there are four citizens, which can be understood as residents of the local community, citizens of the nation, citizens of Asia, and citizens of the earth. This understanding indicates the multilayered quality of citizenship as well as of the condition of participation. In this way, participation shows itself to be both important and multilayered in redefining the local, and it presents possibilities for a corresponding

diversity of actions.

The perspective of linking to the world in participation also leads to an interrogation of aspects of cooperation. If the investigation of a problem does not dig deeply enough, and if the perspectives of definition and pursuit of the issue, as well as of participation, are unclear, then the one-directional assistance directed toward problem resolution can give rise to numerous problems at the levels of the nation, group, and populace, as is well known. What is needed at the local community level is for the local residents to share the problem conditions and issues of their respective local communities, and by means of their respective participation, to give rise to a state of cooperation that is bidirectional, mutually complementary, and diverse.

3. A design for learning delineated by five perspectives

A local community is actually less to be taken as a portion cut out of the world or a society and can be taken more as a basic societal unit that includes within itself multiple layers of elements considered necessary for human beings to continue living, such as politics, the economy, culture, history, natural environments, and so on. Development education is an attempt to approach, from education, the realization of a sustainable society of which the principles are fairness, harmonious coexistence, and resolution of poverty, economic disparity, and other such problems that are surfacing in the world and becoming increasingly serious. Many of the aspects of those problems are visible in the local communities that are our own immediate surroundings. It is difficult to imagine how a desirable society could be realized in the world in the absence of any undertaking from the local community that is close to home to look closely at those aspects, to depict the conditions of a desirable society, and to participate in its realization. This is truly a matter that calls for actual practice from the local community.

The present paper, taking this kind of critical awareness as its foundation, will identify the following three points as distinctive characteristics of learning that is delineated by the perspective of curriculum creation discussed here.

The first distinctive characteristic is an essential and basic point in terms of consideration of the desired form of education and learning. It is that this kind of learning seeks to establish the wholeness of human existence itself as the foundation for theories of education and learning. This paper has presented a number of connections as perspectives for the creation of a curriculum. With those connections as a foundation, this approach encompasses a perception that seeks to grasp in a whole the state of human existence as a natural being, a social being, and a historical being. In other

words, the human being is a natural being that lives its relationships with body, mind, heredity, growth, and other such internal nature as well as with the external nature forming the environment enfolding the human being. It is also a social being that lives its societal relationships with politics, the economy, culture, and so on, and it is a historical being that lives its relationships with past, present, and future. Those beings are fundamentally connected together in a whole. SD (sustainable society) is a term indicating the sustainability of the state of society in a multifaceted manner from political, economic, cultural, and other perspectives. If ESD, then, seeks to describe the state of the human being in the interest of moving toward that sustainable society by means of education, it is absolutely imperative that ESD have the state of the whole human being as a natural being, social being, and historical being solidly in place at its foundation. The causes of the unsustainability visible in present-day society are in the inclination toward efficiency, rationality, utility, or some other specific value or principle. In the same way, it is clear that the problems of education in the present day have their causes in an orientation toward some specific part of the human being or in a tendency to grasp the human being in a fragmented manner. To have the wholeness of the human being solidly in place at their foundation is absolutely essential for linking together the state of learning and education and the state of society, and for perceiving totality there.

The second distinctive characteristic is that this kind of learning sought to find connectedness in the ways of reading and interpreting local communities by means of learning, and likewise in the ways of reading and interpreting the problems and issues faced by local communities and the world. In other words, this has to do with the local community and the world being living spaces that include in themselves political, economic, cultural, historical, natural environmental, and other such elements that are dynamically interrelated in ways transcending conventional fixed regions and nations. In that context, it is important to examine the problems and issues found in local communities and the world and to read and interpret them in terms of their interrelatedness from the perspectives of environmental suitability and social fairness in order to give rise to a structural learning that has a sense of reality as well as to give rise to actions to achieve solutions to problems with a sense of reality and specificity. Another point here is that when an attempt is made to grasp education and learning from the perspective of culture formation and culture creation, it becomes apparent that culture itself is essentially a problem-solving measure that contains temporality and spatiality in itself. The configuration of problems and issues and the formation of cooperativeness endow culture formation with specificity. In that light, learning and action that take up the problems and issues found in local communities amid their

temporal and spatial connectedness and, while reading and interpreting them with care, recombines them anew, will naturally come to be connected with the formation of a culture of sustainability, of fairness, and of harmonious coexistence.

The third distinctive characteristic is that this kind of learning, taking the above two characteristics into account, sought to show the diversity of the educational approach. In other words, the five perspectives (<1> Digging into the local, <2> Linking up with people, <3> Linking up with history, <4> Linking up with the world, <5> Participating) proposed for creation of a curriculum that digs into the local and links it to the world variously indicate the diversity of the educational approach. What is meant by the educational approach here is a concept that includes educational objectives and educational methods in itself. Following perspectives <2> to <5>, this would be education that gives rise to cooperativeness, education that learns from the past and delineates the future, education that reads and interprets the relatedness of the local community and the world, and education that aims for participation in society. This concept, however, is greatly liberated from the conditions and paradigms of conventional education, which was rather closed in terms of cooperativeness, temporality, spatiality, activity, and so on. The educational approach here can be said to include within itself a diversity of approaches that transform those closed qualities.

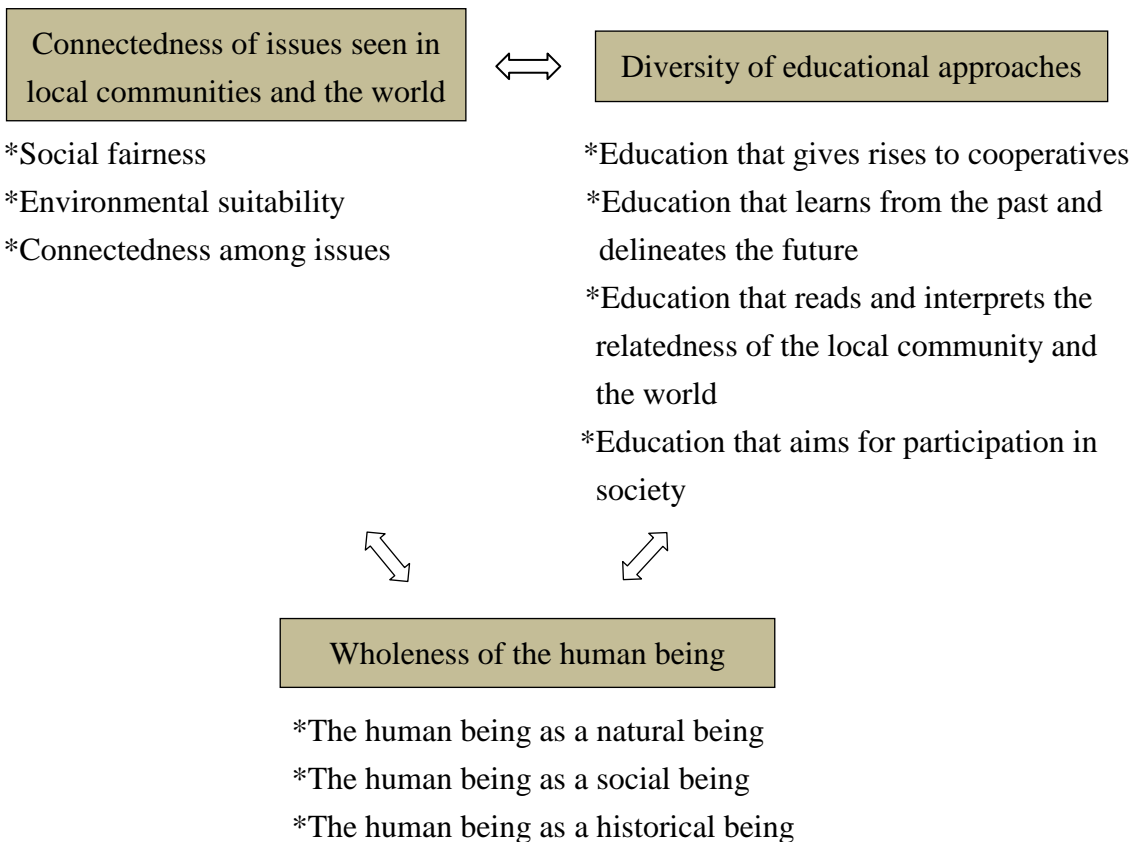


Figure 3-2. Design of learning: Three distinguishing characteristics that are sought

In other words, the perspective of curriculum creation presented in this paper includes three major distinguishing characteristics, which are that it is founded in the wholeness seen in the human being, it reads and interprets the connectedness seen in the problems and issues faced by local communities and the world, and it gives rise to diversity in educational approaches. As shown in Figure 3-2, connections form among these characteristics, and this approach seeks to design new learning by means of those connections.

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Notes

(1) The expression "culture of peace" was first used publicly at the International Congress "Peace in the Minds of Men" held in the Ivory Coast in 1989. Since then, work has been done at UNESCO, in particular, to define that concept and formulate action plans for its realization. For example, the United Nations designated 2000 the International Year for a Culture of Peace, and this international year was inherited by the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World of 2001-2010.

(2) Yuichi Moritomo, *Naihatsuteki hatten no mich—machizukuri, murazukuri no ronri to tenbo* [The way of endogenous growth: Logic and prospects of town building and village building] (Rural Culture Association, 1991), p. 28.

(3) Koyu Furusawa, "Jizoku kano shakai no kochiku to NGO no yakuwari—Shakai shisutemu no henkaku kara posuto chikyu samitto o kangaeru" [Construction of a sustainable society and the role of the NGO: Thinking about the post global summit from social system reform] in *Kaihatsu Kyoiku* [Development Education] No. 46 (Development Education Association and Resource Center, 2002).

(4) Fair trade is a movement for import and purchase at fair prices of products and goods produced in developing countries for the purpose of supporting the independence of the producers and reforming unfair trade structures.

(5) Community business can be understood as business that seeks to resolve local issues, encourage participation by local residents, and contribute to development of the local community. The effects of such business, as cited by Nobutaka Hosouchi, are restoration of humanity, resolution of social problems, transmission and creation of culture, and establishment of economic foundations. See Nobutaka Hosouchi, *Komyunitei bijinesu* [Community business] (Chuo University Press, 1999).

From *ESD Development Education Curriculum Study Group of the Development Education Association and Resource Center (Specified Nonprofit Corporation), ed., Kaihatsu kyoiku de jissen suru ESD karikyuramu – chiiki o horisage, sekai to tsunagaru manabi no dezain* [ESD Curriculum Implemented in Development Education: Design for Learning that Digs into the Local Community and Connects with the World] (Gakubunsha, 2010), pp. 40-52.