

Socio-ecological Transitions at the Ateneo de Manila University: Using a Whole-of-society Approach for Education for Sustainable Development

Abstract :

In addressing the current socio-ecological transitions, sustainability education at the Ateneo de Manila University employs a whole-of-society approach, which engages and empowers different stakeholders, including not only members of the university but also partners from boundary communities, business and the private sector, NGOs, and government units. Thus, amidst the tensions of the bustling city life in Metro Manila, the Ateneo de Manila continues to position itself as a prime leader in environmental sustainability in the country and in the region by fostering transformative education for sustainable development for students and other stakeholders through teaching, research, and outreach. **In terms of teaching**, sustainability is incorporated into academic programs ranging from a mandatory SocSci13 course on sustainable development to SDG-aligned real-world problem solving-based electives and an optional Minor in Sustainability, as well as Masters of Science degree in Sustainability Management and in Disaster Risk and Resilience. With these, students technical understanding of environmental processes and dynamics are complemented with sociological realities that contextualize these ecological problems. **In terms of research**, fostering a systems approach, Ateneo de Manila involves students in research works which are interdisciplinary and impact-driven. For one, a known regional leader in freshwater invertebrate taxonomy, the Ateneo Biodiversity Research Laboratory discovered 60 insect species from all over the country in the last four years, primarily as part of student thesis. Highlighting the University priority area of integral ecology, the student-researchers of the lab work hand-in-hand with local governments and grassroot community leaders in promoting species conservation in human-dominated landscapes and in elucidating the impact of climate crisis to their local biodiversity. **In terms of outreach**, building outreach projects on environment and sustainability requires fostering an ecological mindset among the stakeholders. Driven by bottom-up and consultative initiatives and supported by top administration, the Ateneo Institute of Sustainability involves the community in the development of projects on waste management, urban biodiversity, water recycling, alternative energy, and disaster resilience. By having various campus sustainability initiatives, such as the citizen science page The Ateneo Wild and the monthly Nature Walk, the Ateneo de Manila University is a living laboratory for urban biodiversity and campus sustainability with students not being passive receivers of information, but active players in socio-ecological transitions.

In this day and age, the society, in reality, involves the global community. Thus, beyond the campus, the Ateneo de Manila hosts numerous **networks of universities and other key players** to leverage intellectual and financial resources in rethinking transitions. For example, Ateneo de Manila hosts the ASEAN University Network on Ecological Education and Culture (AUN-EEC), which envisions to develop a generation of Southeast Asians who will have the competencies to conserve the environment amidst the array of regional environmental challenges. Being a network of 40 universities, youth groups and CSO, AUN-EEC values the nuances on ecological education by focusing on pertinent topics in the region such as tapping into indigenous knowledge, promoting citizen science, and highlighting the initiatives of the youth themselves. Additionally, Ateneo de Manila hosts the Sustainable Development Solutions Network Philippines (SDSN PH) convenes 30 universities and business partners in advancing the 2030 Agenda in the country. With this, the Ateneo de Manila ensures that our work on sustainability transcends national boundaries and that we actively take part in the region.