

Integrating ESG and Social Economy Principles into Philippine Curriculum: A Framework for Sustainable Development

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Abstract The global stress on Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) and Social Economy (SE) principles is vital for sustainable development. Integrating these into Philippine education is paramount given national environmental and social challenges, yet a systematic curriculum approach is lacking. This paper proposes a conceptual framework, derived from literature and policy synthesis, detailing core principles, curriculum entry points, key competencies, and action-oriented pedagogies. Its implementation can advance Philippine sustainable development goals by cultivating citizens equipped for responsible, sustainable practices.

1. Introduction

Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) criteria and Social Economy (SE) principles are key to global sustainable development. ESG assesses organizational impact through environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and robust governance, aligning with the core tenet of meeting present needs without compromising future generations. SE models, such as cooperatives and social enterprises, prioritize societal and environmental objectives alongside economic viability, driven by solidarity and collective action. In the Philippines, ESG is advancing through regulatory (e.g., PSE, BSP guidelines) and investor drivers, while SE offers complementary community-focused development, though it faces challenges. Given the nation's climate vulnerability and socio-economic disparities, sustainable development aligned with the SDGs is a national priority, with education as a crucial instrument. Existing K-12 and higher education curricula provide avenues to integrate ESG/SE, supporting national goals like AmBisyon Natin 2040 and the Philippine Development Plan. However, despite specific initiatives like DepEd's Climate Change Education, a comprehensive, systematically integrated ESG/SE curriculum framework is absent. This paper proposes such a framework to cultivate sustainability and responsible citizenship.

2. Methods

This paper's framework, developed using a conceptual research methodology, synthesizes academic literature

(ESG, SE, ESD) and Philippine government/regulatory documents (DepEd, CHED, NEDA, PSE, BSP). The process involved identifying core principles, mapping them to existing curricula, defining necessary competencies, and selecting context-relevant pedagogical approaches. For practicality, the framework builds upon current K-12 and CHED structures, avoiding a complete overhaul.

3. Results: A Proposed Framework for Integration

The proposed framework offers a multi-dimensional strategy for embedding ESG and Social Economy principles across various educational levels within the Philippines. It is designed to be adaptable, guiding the development of curricula that are responsive to both global sustainability imperatives and local realities. The framework emphasizes a holistic integration where core ESG and SE principles inform curriculum content across various learning areas and disciplines, from basic (K-12) to higher education. This content, in turn, is designed to cultivate key 21st-century competencies. The pedagogical approaches suggested are predominantly action-oriented and experiential, aiming to move beyond mere knowledge transmission to foster critical thinking, ethical decision-making, and active engagement. This approach aligns with the principles of ESD, which call for transformative pedagogy and the development of holistic competencies. The framework is intended to be flexible, allowing for contextualization within specific disciplines and local community needs, ensuring a coherent and progressive learning pathway towards sustainability literacy for all Filipino learners.

4. Discussion

Implementing this framework holds significant potential for advancing sustainable development in the Philippines. It directly supports the achievement of several SDGs, notably SDG 4 (Quality Education) by enhancing curriculum relevance, SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) by preparing students for green and socially-oriented jobs, SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) by instilling sustainable practices, and SDG 13 (Climate Action) by fostering environmental literacy and agency. This educational

reform aligns with national development blueprints like the Philippine Development Plan and AmBisyon Natin 2040, which emphasize inclusive growth and resilience.

The integrated approach offers multiple benefits: it can cultivate a citizenry that is environmentally conscious, socially aware, and ethically grounded. It also develops crucial 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration, enhancing graduates' employability in an evolving economic landscape that increasingly values sustainability. Furthermore, by promoting the Social Economy's values of solidarity and collective action, the framework can contribute to strengthening social cohesion. Figure 1 illustrates the approximate distribution of example integration points across the core ESG and SE categories. Counts are based on illustrative bullet points.

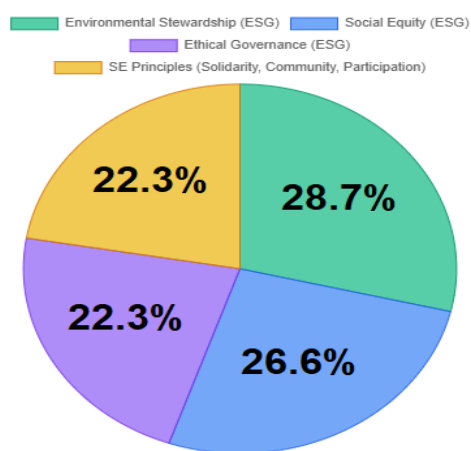


Figure 1. Relative emphasis of ESG/SE categories.

However, the framework's conceptual nature necessitates further contextualization, pilot testing, and empirical validation. Potential implementation challenges include the need for comprehensive teacher training, development and provision of adequate learning resources, addressing existing curriculum congestion, and fostering robust multi-stakeholder collaboration among DepEd, CHED, industry partners, and civil society organizations. There is also a risk of superficial integration; thus, a deep, transformative approach consistent with ESD principles is crucial. The success of such curricular reform is contingent not only on changes within classrooms but also on aligned policies from educational authorities, sufficient funding, and strong partnerships that provide real-world experiential learning opportunities. Future directions should include the development of specific learning modules and extensive teacher professional development programs. Further research is needed to assess the impact of such integrated curricula on student learning outcomes and their subsequent engagement in sustainable practices. Policy dialogues among DepEd, CHED, the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC), and industry stakeholders are essential to create a supportive ecosystem for widespread and effective implementation. Ultimately, integrating ESG and SE principles into the curriculum can serve as a powerful lever for broader

societal transformation, as educated individuals carry these values and competencies into their diverse roles as professionals, consumers, and citizens, thereby influencing corporate behavior, community practices, and policy development.

5. Conclusion

The integration of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) and Social Economy (SE) principles into the Philippine curriculum is not merely an academic exercise but a strategic imperative for national sustainable development. This paper has proposed a conceptual framework designed to guide this integration across basic and higher education, fostering a generation of Filipinos equipped to address complex sustainability challenges. By systematically embedding these principles, the Philippine education system can cultivate responsible citizenship, enhance critical 21st-century skills, and contribute directly to the nation's development goals. The proposed framework offers a viable pathway, but its realization demands concerted and collaborative action from educational institutions, government agencies, and diverse societal stakeholders to translate this vision into tangible and transformative educational reforms. This endeavor represents a proactive investment in nation-building, empowering the youth to become agents of a more sustainable and equitable future for the Philippines.

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