



Educators' general assembly highlights key studies on environmental education and sustainable development

Academic experts, environmental advocates, researchers, and students gathered at the annual General Assembly of the Philippine Association of Tertiary Level Educational Institutions in Environmental Protection and Management (PATLEPAM) featuring research papers on environmental education and sustainable development.

The key studies provided data, tools, and strategies to help institutions in addressing environmental challenges, especially during pandemics.

Fourteen of the technical research papers pre-selected out of 30 entries, covered topics ranging from greenhouse gas emission, green education, water, and hazardous wastes management, carbon footprints, biodiversity, natural resources management, and technology, among others.

The National Educators' Conference organized by the PATLEPAM, in coordination with the Environmental Management Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (EMB-DENR) was held online on 24 November 2021. It has the theme: "Lead the Change: Building Back Higher Education for a Sustainable Future."

DENR Undersecretary for Policy, Planning and International Affairs Jonas R. Leones said, "the researches and studies presented may provide necessary extensive reference to the policy and regulatory reforms devised and conceived by the DENR to bolster and substantiate its commitment to preserve and protect the environment."

The President of PATLEPAM and the Director of the Institute of Civil Engineering, UP Diliman Dr. Maria Antonia N. Tanchuling further said: "Our research outputs are not meant to stay in our libraries alone. Our publications and conference presentations are not meant for the promotion merits nor for our university accreditation only. These will be more meaningful if we take them to the ground and see the impact it can have on the beneficiaries."

The PATLEPAM, composed of academic institutions nationwide, in partnership with EMB-DENR, aims for local empowerment in environmental management through the academe. The institution is now in its 26th year.

"The role of PATLEPAM in empowering higher education is crucial in establishing sustainability in colleges and universities to improve the quality of the environment." "By organizing

universities into a national network, we are assured of a good mechanism in ensuring higher education for a strengthened environmental education and management among local universities and colleges,” Atty. Leones said.

Sessions at the general assembly included Q and A and presentation of the recently conducted “Survey on Facemask Management in the Philippines.” The face mask survey was conducted mainly to estimate the national generation of facemask waste, determine the facemask waste management practices of Filipinos and how it is being implemented by local government units (LGUs), and to recommend policies based on data gathered. The result of the facemask study estimates that the Philippines currently disposes roughly 25 million face masks a day, with pre-disposal practices varying in terms of segregation, temporary storage, disinfection, and mode of collection, among others. Data collection was done through two online surveys - one for the general public and another for the LGUs, a focus group discussion (FGD) with stakeholders, and a review of related literature.

According to Dr. Tanchuling, who spearheaded the face mask survey, “the stakeholders’ consultation with LGU representatives provided feedback on the survey results, as well as inputs on how to improve the country’s facemask use and management practices.” Among the suggestions for the LGUs are the possible daily collection of face mask wastes from households in isolation, the need to increase confidence in using reusable facemasks in low-risk situations, and the promotion of reusable face masks and support to local manufacturers.

Other concerns discussed during the general assembly were the report on the National Determined Contribution (NDC) Support Project and the preparation of the Climate Action Plan.

The general assembly was participated by representatives from higher educational institutions nationwide, partners, EMB Regional offices and stakeholders. ###