

Education for Sustainable Development during the Covid19 Pandemic: Localization of SDGs through E-SL in Purposive Communication

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Abstract: The publication of the ESD 2030 in 2020 is an urgent call for change to mitigate the impact of the Covid19 pandemic on the 17 SDGs through education and to accelerate action towards a more sustainable future. The ESD 2030 envisions enacting change in education through increasing awareness of SDGs, localization of the 17 goals, and mobilizing action to achieve the global goals. However, there seems to be a dearth of literature on the implementation of ESD 2030 in higher education. This paper is an attempt to address this gap by describing the course design process to achieve the three goals mentioned above in Purposive Communication at De La Salle University. In addition, this paper also reports the analysis of the localization of e-service learning (E-SL) projects of students during the Covid19 pandemic through the identification of common themes using content analysis of videos and documents from the 97 GEPCOMM classes in the past 4 trimesters. The findings showed that E-SL helped students to increase their awareness, practice localization, and mobilize action toward SDGs in situations where face-to-face classes and service were not possible.

Key Words: education for sustainable development; e-service learning; localization of SDGs; Purposive Communication

1. INTRODUCTION

The publication of the Education for Sustainable Development Roadmap in 2020 by UNESCO is an urgent call for action to address the impact of the pandemic on the attainment of the SDGs. The document states that “for our own survival, we must learn to live together sustainably on this planet. We must change the way we think and act as individuals and societies, So, in turn, education must change to create a peaceful and sustainable world for the survival and prosperity of the current generation” (UNESCO, 2020, p. ii). The ESD for 2030 enables the achievement of the 17 SDGs by raising

awareness of the goals in education settings, promoting critical and contextualized understanding of the SDGs, and mobilizing action towards the achievement of the SDGs (UNESCO, 2020).

Service learning is a pedagogical approach that integrates sustainable development (Plata and Moredo, 2021). modality. “Service-learning is a high impact practice, is a course-based, credit-bearing type of experiential learning” (Faulconer, 2021, p. 100). One type of service learning is online or e-service learning. In this approach, both the instruction and service are conducted online. Research shows its benefits. First, according to Plata and Moredo (2021), E-SL promotes

“understanding of SDGs, learning collaboration and teamwork, and understanding civic responsibility” (p.1). Second, E-SL saves time, ensures diversity of partners and accessibility (Salam et al, 2019). Third, it improves student achievement and engagement (Faulconer, 2021). However, despite some research on E-SL, what seems to be a gap is the link between online service learning and achievement of the three goals of ESD 2030: increasing awareness of the SDGs, localization of SDGs, and student mobilization for action. This paper attempts to fill this gap through a case study of Purposive Communication at De La Salle University during the Covid19 pandemic. Purposive Communication is a General Education course that “hones students' ability to ethically, effectively, and professionally communicate, through the strategic use of various communicative forms, with different multicultural audiences and for different purposes in various modes. This course specifically develops the students' ability to use their communication skills and to use technology for civic participation in support of UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)” (Plata and Moredo, 2021). This paper answers the following research questions:

1. How does E-SL improve the awareness of students on SDGs?
2. How does E-SL encourage the localization of the SDGs?
3. How are students mobilized for action towards the SDGs during the COVID 19 pandemic?

2. METHODOLOGY

This study used the case study approach. Student reflections and student learning outputs were analyzed to uncover the impact of E-SL on awareness, localization, and mobilization for action. Data were collected from four terms starting with Term 1, 2020-2021 to Term 1, 2021-2022.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 summarizes the number of classes, partners, and students in the past four terms. It is worth noting that Purposive Communication E-SL was in partnership with COSCA (Center for Social Action) in

the university. Teachers were given a choice to partner with COSCA in looking for partners for E-SL.

Table 1 Summary of the Sections, Students, and Partner

Term/ Variables	Sections	Faculty	Number of Students	Number of Partner Organizations
T1 AY 2020-21	15	8	566	12
T2 AY 2020-21	20	13	840	18
T3 AY 2020-21	27	14	1, 107	22
T1 AY 2021-22	35	17	1, 465	20

RQ 1 How does E-SL improve the awareness of SDGs?

Table 2 shows the design of the E-SL to increase awareness of SDGs. First, students are grouped into SDGs through the LMS Canvas. The system randomly assigns students, and the group number refers to the SDG they need to localize. There are three members in each group. Second, each group plans and writes a problem-solution essay on a local problem under the SDFG group. Third, the students increase their awareness during the Advocacy Forum when civil society groups describe the SDGs they support. Fourth, students present to the invited NGOs the advocacy material they prepared. In this way, they also learn from the other groups on solutions for other SDGs.

Table 2. E-SL Design

Phases	Activity
Pre eService-Learning Phase	Grouping of students according to SDGs. (3 per team).
	Selection and Identification of Partner Organization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • must be aligned with the vision-mission of the university • recognized and legally registered organization • localized SDGs through its programs and services
	Orientation on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership and Commitment

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service-Learning 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of website designed by students to boost the organization's presence and advocate their programs and services contributing to the attainment of SDGs.
	Outlining of PPT by partners for the Advocacy Forum <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content Review • Dry Run 		
	Research paper writing on a local problem under the SDG of each group. The format is problem-solution-evaluation.		
eService-Learning Phase	Advocacy Forum Presentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing of the organization on who they are, what are their programs, why they are doing these, for whom they are doing these, contribution in attaining SDG & how they localize it, and how can students help. 		
	Student Selection of Partner Organization for Collaboration in Localizing SDG		
	Collaboration with students in preparing Advocacy Plan		
	Response to student inquiries and support during project implementation (development of Advocacy Campaign Materials in promoting the localization of SDGs)		
	Class Presentation of Output <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide feedback and insights to further develop the Advocacy Campaign Materials 		
Post eService-Learning Phase	Accomplish Evaluation on eService-Learning Experience		
	Utilization of Student Output <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posting of advocacy campaign materials in various social media like FB, Instagram and Twitter • Printing and distribution of IEC materials such as posters, flyers, brochure etc. 		

As can be seen in Table 2, E-SL was designed into three phases: pre-ESL, E-SL phase, and post-E-SL. It is worth noting that prior to the pandemic, service learning was conducted in a hybrid mode where partners presented to students face to face, but the actual service was conducted online. However, the pandemic that closed all schools in the Philippines also inspired the researchers to re-design the course and E-SL to ensure that partners and students would be able to collaborate. It is worth noting that the advocacy forum was moved to week three during Term 3, 2020-2021 because of the request for students to align their other class outputs such as the problem-solution essay, advocacy plan, and advocacy campaign materials with the local problems addressed by partners.

Student reflections show the link between the course and their awareness of the SDGs.

I have always known how important the SDGs. I got most of my advocacies from the SDGs. However, going through GEPCOMM, gave me a deeper appreciation for the other SDGs that I neglected as we could connect all the SDGs, no matter how far it may seem.

Being introduced to the idea of the Sustainable Development Goals set up by the United Nations General Assembly made me more interested to see what's in store for our future. Since I had to develop solutions on how to solve at least one of the seventeen problems, I had to generate ideas and innovative solutions that were possible and would last long. Knowing that the SDG is intended to be achieved in the year 2030, I also had to consider future trends that would affect my proposed solution. Though it may not be easy to execute the solution quickly, it was a learning experience to have a creative mindset and explore different areas to develop possible solutions. (Student Ang, Z).

2. How does E-SL encourage the localization of the SDGs?

Table 3 shows the localization of SDGs through student and NGO partnerships.

Table 3 Partner Organizations and SDGs They Localize

Partner Organization	SDGs
Handicapped Center Lourdes	Goal 1, 2, 3 & 10
Lian Fisher Folks Association	Goal 1, 8, 12 & 14
LSDP - EnviSaGe	Goal 6, 11, 13, 14 & 15
Mediators Network for Sustainable Peace	Goal 16 & 17
SOS Community Village	Goal 1, 4, 8 & 16
Las Pinas Persons with Disabilities	Goal 8 & 10
Educational Research and Development Assistance	Goal 1, 4, 5 & 8
Gawad Kalinga	Goal 1, 2, 3, 7, 11, 13 & 15
Tahanan Outreach Projects and Services	Goal 1, 3, 4, 5 & 15
General Trias Dairy Raisers Multi-Purpose Coop.	Goal 1, 2, 3, & 8

As can be seen in Table 3, civil society group advocacies are varied and localized. For example, Handicapped Center Lourdes addresses the needs of people with disability in Quezon City while Gawad Kalinga advocacies include “building cohesive and sustainable communities, shelter and land security, child

and youth development, health and wellbeing, social business and family productivity”(Gawad Kalinga, 2021).

It is worth noting that the advocacy forum was moved to week 3 during Term 3, 2020-2021 because of the request for students to align their other class outputs such as the problem-solution essay, advocacy plan, and advocacy campaign materials with the local problems addressed by partners. Students localize the SDGs in three ways. First, students plan and write a problem-solution-evaluation essay on a local problem under the SDG assigned to them. The essay is a collaborative output of triads. Some students align their topics with the local problems of the NGO partner they chose while others chose to work on other local issues. Examples of essay topics are shown below:

Food Insecurity in Pangasinan (SDG2)

Building Resilient Students: Inter-Disciplinary Measures to Combat Academic Stress During the Pandemic (SDG 3)

The River of Reminiscing: Can we bring back the Pasig of the past? (SDG 6)

Sustaining Manila's Infrastructures Through Flood Management and Innovative Designs (SDG 9)

As shown in the examples, students localized the SDGs by focusing on a certain community or locale. Some groups also anchored their essay topic on the local problems addressed by an NGO they chose during the advocacy forum.

The second localization process is through the advocacy planning and preparation of the advocacy plan material for the partner organizations. “Localizing refers to adapting, implementing and monitoring the SDGs at the local level” (Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments in Fox & McLeod, 2021, p. 3). The authors also found that localizing SDGs through partnerships increases the awareness of SDGs among stakeholders and creates a shared understanding of the process of implementation and monitoring.

Sample student reflections below show the impact of the experience to localize the SDGs.

After the service learning, I realized that localizing SDGs is the first step in the

improvement of the issues in the Philippines. It will benefit the economy of the Philippines, as well as help those who are in need. Ang, C.

This project really allowed me to step out of myself and into the shoes of both KHA, and the partner communities they often helped. In doing so, I was able to gain a wider perspective on some of the systemic issues that remain rampant in our country, as well as the ways— both abstract and concrete — that they can be addressed. I was also able to gain a deeper understanding of the Lasallian mission and what it means to not only express empathy for the vulnerable but also strive to become part of the solution rather than the problem. (Student C.E)

3. How are students mobilized for action towards the SDGs during the COVID 19 pandemic?

Despite the closure of schools and quarantine protocols, De La Salle University students of Purposive Communication continue their classes fully online through the LMS Canvas and synchronous classes via Zoom. Students are mobilized in two ways. First, they analyze the social media communication needs of their partner NGO during the advocacy Forum. Second, some groups conduct a social media audit in order to assess the quality of the posts and to recognize areas for improvement. In this way, the students will be able to contribute to the advocacy communication of their chosen partner organizations. Sample advocacy campaign projects are shown below

- AVP on climate change
- Posters promoting environment protection
- Infographic materials on gender equality
- Infographic materials on spreading awareness about PWDs;
- Child-friendly IEC materials promoting Children's rights;
- Advocacy materials in promoting the organization's vision and mission;
- AVP on youth engagement in Barangays and AVP for participatory democracy

As can be seen from the examples, despite the limitations on face-to-face interaction, the students can be mobilized using their technical skills in helping NGOs localize the SDGs and to increase awareness about their organization and their advocacies. The examples also show a variety of ways by which students serve.

Examples of student reflections show the impact of the service learning:

I would say that this service learning experience made me realize my capabilities in helping others. (Student. B.)

How it can be possible with the right organization and communication and how important it is to do so as it is our moral obligation to do so. It also made me realize that these SDG goals though they sound quite grand can be done incrementally in smaller communities. (Student Avila, S)

NGOs are very thoughtful in how they intend to help their society. However, there are those that fail to gather enough resources and support because of a lack of awareness. Therefore, I became a critical and creative thinker through the course requirement of developing publication materials for an NGO. Through the pub-mat, I was able to meet the needs of the NGO in developing a resource that will increase its organization's online presence in an attempt to continue helping those in need. (Student, V.B.)

4. CONCLUSIONS

This paper was an attempt to address the gaps in the literature on the role of E-SL in increasing awareness and localizing the SDGs, and mobilizing the youth despite the pandemic. The student reflections affirm the design of the fully online service learning design. The practices described in this paper may be of help to universities as they move to the New Normal. Teachers may want to conduct action research to address some problems they encounter among students. Further research may also be conducted from the perspective of partner organizations in terms of the localization and mobilization of their partner

students.

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