

The Practice of Green Social Work in the Context of Protected Areas in the Philippines: Input for Curriculum Development

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ABSTRACT : Since human wellbeing clearly depends on the environment, the part of the environment in social work's mission and scope ought to be a critical issue. Social work should also highlight the relevance of the environment and the significant roles that social workers play in the advocacy and protection of the environment such as the protected areas. The basis of this paper therefore anchors on the interlinkages of the social work profession with green social work practice or the eco-social work paradigm. Utilizing literature review, this paper discussed the importance of protected areas and their conservation in the practice of green social work in the Philippines. The findings of the analysis were considered as important inputs for the enhancement of social work curriculum in the Philippines by integrating the green social work paradigm in the course offerings.

Keywords: Green social work practice, curriculum development, protected areas, Philippines

I. INTRODUCTION

The practice of social work does not only entail making sense of social relevance and transformation but also advocate environmental consciousness to act on preservation and conservation of the ecological systems to put forward social justice and environmental sustainability. Meaning, social work can have a big influence on promoting sustainable development especially in the sustainability of protected areas. Alston and Besthorn (2012) argued that attention to human-rights-based practice and anti-oppressive practice is the basis for social work in the area of environment and sustainability. Further, McKinnon (2012a) asserted that it is the nexus of social justice and environmental justice that brings sustainability to the forefront of social work consciousness. Incorporating the natural environment into social work therefore is the belief that environmental sustainability is, in addition to theoretical and practical dimensions, an ethical issue. This raises the question of whether and how environmental sustainability and concern for the natural environment are incorporated into current statements of social work ethics. It also raises the question of whether the profession's notions of justice can be expanded to more fully include the natural world. This would include recognizing the importance of environmental justice, but also moving towards ecological justice or 'justice toward the natural world' (Schlosberg, 2001: 1). Besthorn (2012) recognizes the difference between environmental ethos, which shows concern for the impacts of the natural environment on humans, and ecological justice Bowles, W., Boetto, H., Jones, P., & McKinnon, J. (2018).

Hence, the practice of green social work is a growing trend. The International Federation of Social Work in 2020 to 2030 global agenda for social work and social development framework encourage social workers to co-build inclusive social transformation. This means that social workers have the active role in leading sustainable development especially in co-designing and co-building thriving communities and societies for the people and the environment (IFSW, 2020). But despite the importance of this growing trend, this has never been mainstreamed yet in most of the curricular offerings of social work as an academic program in the Philippines.

As a response, this paper hopes to unveil the concept of green social work by connecting the social work profession and environmental consciousness in the context of protected areas. Additionally, looking into the policies, initiatives, and current scenarios of protected areas in the Philippines will shed light on the potential role of social workers to promote sustainability. Finally, the analysis of this scenario may become an important input in enhancing the curriculum of the social work programs in the Philippines by integrating the concept of green social work in the course offerings to transform not just the communities but also empowering them in promoting the sustainability of protected areas.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a qualitative method of literature review which involves researching, reading, analyzing, evaluating, and summarizing scholarly literature (Paul and Criado, 2020) about green social work practice and protected areas. The articles and literatures considered came from online sources and journals. The data collected were analyzed and synthesized. Specifically, this study utilized the semi-systematic or narrative review which is more appropriate for topics that have been conceptualized differently and studied by various groups of researchers within diverse disciplines (Synder, 2019).

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Definition and Concepts related to Protected Area from a Global perspective and in the Philippines

As stated by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) the definition of a protected area as of 2008 refers to *a clearly defined geographical space, recognized, dedicated, and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values* (IUCN website). Furthermore, the explanation of Dudley about protected areas according to the IUCN means that Clearly defined geographical space encompasses land, inland water, marine, and coastal areas or a combination of two or more of these. While the concept of “Space” has three dimensions, for instance when the airspace above a protected area is protected from low-flying aircraft or in marine protected areas when a certain water depth is protected or the seabed is protected but water above is not: conversely subsurface areas sometimes are not protected (e.g., are open for mining). The term “Clearly defined” implies a spatially defined area with agreed and demarcated borders. These borders can sometimes be defined by physical features that move over time (e.g., riverbanks) or by management actions (e.g., agreed no-take zones). *Examples are Wolong Nature Reserve in China (category Ia, terrestrial); Lake Malawi National Park in Malawi (category II, mainly freshwater); Masinloc and Oyon Bay Marine Reserve in the Philippines (category Ia, mainly marine) are examples of areas in very different biomes but all are protected areas.*

Another term in this given definition is the word Recognized which implies that protection can include a range of governance types declared by people as well as those identified by the state, but that such sites should be recognized in some way (in particular through listing on the World Database on Protected Areas – WDPA). For instance, the Anindilyakwa Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) was self-declared by aboriginal communities in the Groote Eylandt peninsula, one of many self-declared IPAs recognized by the government. The word Dedicated connotes a specific binding commitment to conservation in the long term, through examples of International conventions and agreements, national, provincial, and local law, customary law, covenants of NGOs, private trusts, and company policies or certification schemes.

On the other hand, the term Managed Assumes some active steps to conserve the natural (and possibly other) values for which the protected area was established which denotes that “managed” can include a decision to leave the area untouched if this is the best conservation strategy and some many options are possible. Finally, the word Legal or other effective means refers to that protected areas must either be gazette (that is, recognized under statutory civil law), recognized through an international convention or agreement or else managed through other effective but non-gazette means, such as through recognized traditional rules under which community conserved areas operate or the policies of established non-governmental organizations. Protected areas serve as significant tools for the conservation of biological diversity and care crucial in the attainment of sustainable development strategies given that it has provided environmental benefits but also promote economic sources. Therefore, protected areas are necessary to meet the objectives of the Convention of Biological Diversity as mentioned in the foreword of the Executive Secretary of the Convention of Biological Diversity (Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (2008).

Based on the IUCN protected area definition and management categories and governance types protected areas are categorized into six. These are the six management categories (one with a subdivision). First is the Strict nature reserve which refers to the strictly protected biodiversity and also possibly geological/ geomorphological features, where human visitation, use, and impacts are controlled and limited to ensure the protection of the conservation values. Second is the wilderness area which is usually large unmodified or slightly modified areas, retaining their natural character and influence, without permanent or significant human habitation, protected and managed to preserve their natural condition. The third is the national park or also the large natural or near-natural areas protecting large-scale ecological processes with characteristic species and ecosystems, which also have environmentally and culturally compatible spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational, and visitor opportunities. Under this category is the natural monument or feature which are areas set aside to protect a specific natural monument, which can be a landform, sea mount, marine cavern, geological features such as a cave, or a living feature such as an ancient grove. Fourth is the habitat/species

management area. This refers to areas to protect particular species or habitats, where management reflects this priority. Many will need regular, active interventions to meet the needs of particular species or habitats, but this is not a requirement of the category. Fifth is the protected landscape or seascape where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced a distinct character with significant ecological, biological, cultural and scenic value and where safeguarding the integrity of this interaction is vital to protecting and sustaining the area and its associated nature conservation and other values. Sixth is the protected areas with sustainable use of natural resources or areas which conserve ecosystems, together with associated cultural values and traditional natural resource management systems. Generally large, mainly in a natural condition, with a proportion under sustainable natural resource management and where low-level non-industrial natural resource use compatible with nature conservation is seen as one of the main aims.

The declaration of Protected areas globally showed various benefits to humankind. First, protected areas are the critical tool to conserve biodiversity in the face of the global crisis of species extinction and the loss of the world's natural capacity to support all life and human existence. At the same time, the protected resources are often essential to assuring healthy communities. Protected areas provide for life's essentials. They protect natural resources that are critical to many people on earth. Second, protected areas provide for life's diversity by safeguarding species and habitats. Each species is a product of millions of years of evolution. Each species contributes to the extraordinary variety of living creatures on earth. Third, Protected Areas act as life's buffers while serving as sanctuaries and strongholds of species in the face of climate change. Fourth, protected areas are economic engines. They provide life's jobs and livelihoods as a traditional destination for the global tourism industry. The pharmaceutical industry has benefited greatly from the genetic diversity of species and safeguarding species in protected areas will ensure the possibility of discovery of future medicines. As well the economic spin-offs from literature, film, and television add to the positive side of the ledger of the values of protected areas.

Globally - protected areas serve as indicators of achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. At the local level, protected areas contain landscapes with a sense of place and meaning to nations and their people. They offer the opportunity for involvement with restoration and other conservation activities. Such activities Protected Areas in Today's World: Their Values and Benefits for the Welfare of the Planet 2 enhance social outcomes, sometimes dramatically when delinquent youth are transformed into engaged community members. Protected areas provide the settings for healthy outdoor living and recreation. Exploring a protected area offers not only the opportunity to understand nature but also exercise and education. They provide a sense of adventure and challenge, including self-discovery. Achieving personal development goals increases the mental well-being of humans. Much evidence has been accumulated on the recuperative force of nature on recovering patients. Most importantly, protected areas are the setting for providing some of life's most joyous moments. It is within these areas that our spirits can soar and our souls can be replenished. Furthermore, protected areas bring tremendous cultural, ecological, spiritual, and scientific benefits to society. They are critical to preserving global biodiversity and stemming the extinction crisis. Today there are more than 100,000 protected areas worldwide comprising about 12 percent of the Earth's surface (Lopoukhine, N., 2008)

In the Philippines, the study of Senga explained that the Philippines has always been considered one of the major biodiversity hotspots in the world. It is also known as a country with the highest level of diversity and endemism of the life forms and some of the unique species and habitats of critically endangered species and wildlife example is the Philippine eagle. In 1987, the DENR initiated the formulation of a conceptual framework for a Philippine Strategy for Sustainable Development. This resulted from the long process of consultation with various sectors and language refinement, a draft was presented to the Cabinet in 1989 and approved through a Resolution. The underlying goal of the Strategy was to "achieve economic growth with adequate protection of the country's biological resources and its diversity, vital ecosystem functions, and overall environmental quality." One of the key strategies was to establish an integrated protected areas system, which emphasized the preservation of the "variety of genes, species and ecosystems" (Philippine Government, 1989). (La Vina et al, 2010)

According to Senga the last remaining representatives of Philippine habitats and ecosystems were set aside for conservation through innovative approaches spelled out in the National Integrated Protected Areas System (NIPAS) Act of 1992, a landmark piece of legislation that provides the framework for a decentralized, community-based reserve management strategy. NIPAS Act: The Conservation of Priority Protected Areas Project, a seven-year initiative funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) through the World Bank, and the National Integrated Protected Areas Project, a five-year undertaking funded by the European Union. While the two projects share the same broad objectives of biodiversity. The project employs a multistakeholder

approach among government, local communities, NGOs, the scientific community, the private sector, and international partners. It is anchored on a community-based resource management strategy that seeks to empower local communities residing inside and within the buffer zones of parks to manage their own resources and become active partners in protected area management. Providing alternative livelihood opportunities and improving tenurial security of park residents are integral components of this strategy. Participatory management in each park is ensured through the Protected Area Management Board (PAMB), a multi-sectoral body composed of representatives from government, peoples' organizations, NGOs, and indigenous cultural communities. It is the highest policymaking body in Philippine protected areas and the venue for democratic participation of all sectors with a stake in the effective management of these reserves. The structure may be cumbersome and unwieldy at times, but, through time, we strongly believe that the PAMBs will evolve into effective stewards of our country's last repositories of biodiversity—a monumental responsibility to the whole of humankind. In five years of implementing this trailblazing project, NIPA and its partners have established a foundation for models in different aspects of protected area management that could be replicated in the other protected areas of the Philippines and possibly in other parts of the world.

In 2018, The Expanded National Integrated Protected Area Systems (ENIPAS) Act of 2018 was signed by President Duterte to strengthen protection and adds more than 100 legislated protected areas in the Philippines, including the Philippine Rise Marine Resource Reserve. This legislation adopted strong amendatory measures to the 24-year-old National Integrated Protected Area Systems (NIPAS) Act. The said act will enhance the conservation efforts undertaken of our unique but vastly threatened biodiversity and ecosystems including our marine habitats according to the President of an NGO known as Oceana Philippines. This passage of the ENIPAS Act provides a national legislation for all protected areas to ensure their ecological integrity. The act covers the Tañon Strait Protected Seascape, one of the largest marine protected areas in the Philippines and declared as a protected seascape through a Presidential Proclamation in 1998. The ENIPAS Act also covers the Philippine Rise Marine Resource Reserve, which was recently declared as a protected area with strict protection zones. The salient provisions of the Act include the provision for scientific and technical support for biodiversity conservation; delineation and demarcation of boundaries; deputation of support especially on enforcement to the Protected Area Superintendent (PASu); and regular reporting on the status of the Integrated Protected Area Fund (IPAF) and allocating 75% of all revenues raised to the Protected Area Management Board (PAMB). It also prohibits the use and possession of destructive fishing gears within the protected seascape. Furthermore, the ENIPAS Act also expands the mandates of the Department of Justice (DOJ) to appoint special prosecutors handling cases specifically related to protected areas, and assist in the training of wardens and rangers in arrests and criminal procedures (Oceana press release, 2018).

One of the problems in the protected area management is often viewed as a primarily ecological problem, in which managers are “outside” the system and protected areas must be preserved in a historically defined “wild” state. This perspective ignores the relevance of location, context, and connectivity, both ecological and socioeconomic; and particularly, that managers and policy makers, as well as people who work in and visit protected areas, live in a social context that creates demands and expectations about ecosystem management. Even if the ecosystem management focuses on biodiversity, management institutions, their agendas and goals, such as setting target population sizes of animals, fire policies, access rights, or control of invasive species, are social constructs that are created and debated in political arenas (Macneil 2013, Bell and Morrison 2015, Cinner and McClanahan 2015). Thus, failure to recognize the plurality (social, ecological, and economic) of protected areas has in the past created many conservation problems. Lopoukhine, N., Crawhall, N., Dudley, N., Figgis, P., Karibuhoye, C., Laffoley, D., Londoño, J. M., Mackinnon, K., Sandwith, T., & Mainguy, G. (2012).

IV. DEFINITION OF GREEN SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

There is an emerging approach in social practice which is focused on the Ecological Social Work Mckinnon and Alston, 2016 and Green Social Work (Domenille, 2012). This practice is highly connected to the new global definition of social work since it highlights the argument and justification for demands for social justice and respect for human rights and participatory approaches. Moreover, Ecological Social Work emphasizes the significance of humanity and nature at the center of the education and practice in the social work curriculum. Ramsay and Boddy, (2016).

The person-in-environment viewpoint could be a long-standing viewpoint in social work and a few social work researchers recognize the importance of the environment in social work practice, be that as it may, they center on the goals of personal well-being and social welfare. Since 1992, the National Association for Social Work (NASW) has heightened welcome for the inclusion of the physical environment inside the space of social work. According to NASW, securing individuals and the common environment through maintainable advancement is

apparently the fullest realization of the person-in-environment viewpoint. The compatibility of sustainable improvement and the person-in-environment point of view is a firm hypothetical establishment from which to apply large-scale level social work practice to person-natural environment problems. Lucas-Darby, E. T. (2011). As of the present, the bulk of social workers in the Philippines had some limited perspectives in their assessment focusing only on the individuals, groups, and communities and their immediate social environment but there is a limited assessment of the macrophysical environment or the ecosystem of the clients. The current focus of the social case study report addresses social interaction and relationships of individuals and groups with other human beings but on how clients are affected by the natural environment take for instance the impact of natural and manmade disasters and vice versa are not evident and how they cope with this problematic environment is still vague in the social case study report.

The eco-social approach includes diverse hypothetical approaches to social work that have emerged since the 1970s as a reaction to the environmental emergency confronted by cutting-edge society. Within the Anglo-Saxon methodological convention, the biological approach highlights an all-encompassing and systemic point of social problems and the correspondence of the connection between individuals' life framework and their social environments. This approach to social work is caught on as an all-encompassing way of to see at the environment of life and as a concrete way of including people in nearby legislative issues and urbanism, as well as an endeavor to realize hypothetical conceptions of social work that would be consistent with sustainability. Social work needs an all-encompassing investigation of the micro scale, mezzo, and macro-structures of the contexts of the assets and issues of people and communities. The results of ecological crises and shortage of characteristic assets have the most grounded effect on the foremost vulnerable individuals and space which they occupied. Rocha, H. B. (2018).

The IFSW-IASSW Definition of Social Work stated that "social work intercedes at the points where individuals connected with their environments". Ritchie, J. D. (2010) Green social workers have to address structural-social-inequalities such as the unequal distribution of assets and control, bargain with destitution and its effect on individuals, understand global interdependencies, and advance populist and strong connections. Papadimitriou, E., Παπαδημητρίου, E., & Θράκης, Π. (n.d.). Perhaps one of the signs that most clearly indicate the importance of environmental issues in social work is the evident relevance in the literature assumed by the training of the professionals. There is an increasing convergence in affirming that the need for 'greening' social work practice claims for an education transformation integrating environmental content in social work curricula including the field training in order to allow future practitioners to address sustainability and social justice promotion in their communitarian intervention Rocha, H. B. (2018). By teaching Green Social Work practice among social workers as a new practice model we are training new social workers to see a bigger and more relevant perspective on how the worse environment contributed to the problems of individuals and vis-à-vis how they are affected by it. In the context of the Philippines where typhoons, floods, volcanic eruptions, and different kinds of disasters had affected mostly the vulnerable groups like in the case of typhoon Haiyan which caused vast calamity to communities. Therefore, there is a need to reflect on how social work as a profession needed to reframe its assessment tools instead of focusing only on disaster response there is a need to view and reflect that a wider practice model must be adopted that puts emphasis on this dynamic relationship of the physical environment and individuals occupying this space.

In particular, Green social work is a new paradigm in addressing social problems as well as dealing with the negative consequences brought upon the environment by the industrial society of mass consumption (Dominelli, 2012 & 2018). In brief, this approach recognizes a particularly important role for social workers in relation to the issue of environmental injustice and the development of sustainable communities and societies (Jones, 2018; Peeters, 2012; Hetherington & Boddy, 2013). This approach is needed because the social impact of industrialization on the environment worsens unsustainable development models, power dynamics, and consumerism, by the implementation of neoliberal policy and imbalanced resource distribution (Mason et al., 2017; Rinkel & Powers, 2017; Shajahan & Sharma, 2018). These factors are central to the prevailing socio-economic systems that exacerbate structural inequalities and worsen the situation for the poor and low-income individuals or communities (Bullard & Johnson, 2000; Montgomery & Chakraborty 2015). It is also these situations that undermine these individuals' capacities to reduce risk, and they also lower their resilience (Dominelli & Ku, 2017; Dominelli, 2012). Papadimitriou, E., Παπαδημητρίου, E., & Θράκης, Π. (n.d.).

In the situation of the Philippines, it is essential that we need to teach future social workers to understand this symbiotic relationship and consider this by making assessments and interventions in the generalist social work practice which is highly relevant to Filipino clients. Although there are social workers working on the cause and issues for the environment some of them do not see such interconnections or they lack the framework for

how to view the client's problem from a more appropriate perspective. The relevance of green social work practice is that social work students will have a wider lens on how the problems of the clients were brought by the direct environment which is caused by irresponsible mining practices or simply in areas affected by floods because of lack of proper garbage management. Social workers must play an active role in the protection of the ecosystem which can be a source of livelihood like in the situation of indigenous communities. In addition, social workers who are working with ancestral domains should include in their interventions green social work practice. I think it is high time for social welfare agencies to also embrace a bigger perspective than the usual micro and limited interventions. Aside from intervening during and after the disaster, there is a need to look into the context of the ecosystem, ecological crisis, climate change, and context protected areas highly relevant in the Philippines as the center of biodiversity.

As a matter of fact, the significance of Green Social Work is the idea of co-producing 'transformative social change that creates a living, viable earth with equitable shared and distributed resources and opportunities' (Dominelli, 2018, pp. 18-19). Specifically, all these different approaches connect the social, economic, and ecological dimensions to each other, thereby making a shift from modernist to holistic foundations in social work education and practice (Ramsay and Boddy, 2016). Dominelli (2014) argued that citizenship-based rights, and guaranteeing that such concerns are secured in social work's educational module which she shows proposed as Green Social Work practice. In social work, the environment is for the most part utilized to speak to a person's family and other connections, community and societal structures and frameworks, and maybe physical living spaces. When social workers allude to a person's environment, it appears that they are not more often than not alluding to the normal environment. Ritchie, J. D. (2010). This perspective advances anti-oppressive approaches that empower moral conduct, social and environmental justice, and human rights in reactions to COVID-19. A GSW point of view receives a holistic, environment-friendly, transdisciplinary, relational, and political control relation inclined to the 'person-in-the-environment' to include both environmental and socio-economic, political settings inside which humans live and act (Dominelli, 2012).

Social workers in other countries like in Kazakhstan and in the USA are also working for environmental protection as they are part of the protected area management, and eco-tourism management and they are active players in helping the communities understand the community-based resource management. These can also be considered in the Philippines knowing that we are using community organization in our practice then we also integrate Green Social Work practice in this practice model. In addition, we are helping communities to be more sustainable, empowered, and self-reliant by instilling in them the values of environmental protection. It is noted that there are communities that are dependent on the sustainable use of natural resources that find themselves particularly vulnerable to biodiversity and ecosystem degradation. There is evidence emerging that the long-term investments being made by national governments and communities in protected area systems globally are having a large pay-off. It is highlighted in various studies that protected areas are an efficient and effective means to address biodiversity loss, help buffer society from the effects of climate change, and maintain the critical ecosystem services on which all societies depend. Schmitz, C. L., Matyók, T., Sloan, L. M., & James, C. (2012). Thus, in this sense, I can see the connection of applying the Green Social work practice lens in improving the conditions of the protected areas and moving towards sustainability.

IV. Conclusion and Implications for Curriculum Development

Building a better world after COVID-19 requires a new normal perspective and by giving consideration to a new model of practice which is the Green Social Work practice I find that there is a possibility that we can build a new and more sustainable world. The Green Social Work practice requires social workers to integrate concepts on the environment especially the physical environment in understanding the problems of individuals, groups, and communities. There are many instances that the Philippines encountered several typhoons or was affected by earthquakes that greatly devastated our country and affected various clients but social workers' roles are only limited to pre and post-disaster response which is only limited. The knowledge of social workers which focuses mostly on the social environment neglects to consider how humans are affected by their physical environment and they also have roles in stewardship and rebuilding their own communities.

Problems in the natural environment can mean problems for people. The ecological crisis – human-induced destruction of ecosystems, loss of topsoil, pollution of all parts of the environment including food and human bodies, extinction of species, resource depletion, and especially the current focus on climate change – has led to global awareness of the need for large-scale societal change. These problems clearly have a direct impact on people's daily lives and abilities to survive and negotiate societal systems. Ritchie, J. D. (2010).

The current reality of environmental problems and challenges requires a transdisciplinary and multi-stakeholder approach. Thus, there is a need for more information drive about the Expanded NIPAS law and the

level of participation and engagement to address the problems with protected areas. In conclusion, the integration of topics about Protected Areas in the Philippine Curriculum of Social Work specifically on the subject of Green Social Work practice is highly recommended in order to prepare future social workers for their role which include their participation in the protected area and ecosystem management. The second is creating a Core Group of Teachers/Educators who will teach about Protected Areas in the state colleges and Green Social Work practice and this is in collaboration with the National Association of Social Work Incorporated which is the primary arm of social work education in the Philippines. The third point is the collaboration among the Commission on Higher Education, DSWD, DENR, the Department of Education and State Colleges and Universities, the National Association of Social Work, the and Philippine Association of Social Work to discuss the relevance of environmental protection specifically protected areas and biodiversity in the Philippines. Finally, the current social work practitioners and educators must also revisit the ethical practice of Social Workers in the Philippines and there should be ethics-related environmental protection as part of our solidarity with the International Federation of Social Work Global Agenda and our commitment toward Sustainable Development Goals.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Authors declare that they do not have any conflict of interest.

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