

*The Ecological Ethics of Laudato Si', Its Pedagogy and Doable Solutions  
for A Greener Philippines*

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**Abstract**

Laudato Si', the first encyclical that addresses the environment, challenges us all to survive, thrive and let our generation in times of change “be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life” (LS #207). The Ecological Ethics of Laudato Si' echoes the biblical concept of justice — the Hebraic Covenant Theology, which refers to as Right-Relations in four directions: to God, to oneself, to our fellow human beings and to creation. Pope Francis calls us for this integral ecology to be “educators capable of developing an ethics of ecology, and helping people, through effective pedagogy” (LS #210). Responding to this call toward a Greener Philippines, this paper proposes to incorporate doable ways in making learning authentic based on some key ideas from the instructional principles of constructivist pedagogy and balances it with cognitive and affective approaches where experiential learning moves the student to sympathy, empathy and action. Seventy (70) environmental advocates are sought to identify the most doable among the suggested four solutions namely: Zero Carbon, Zero Waste, Sustainable Water and Sustainable Transportation, which will be integrated to student's experiential learning in any of the four areas, namely: at home, in school, in community and in the work place. The results of the survey suggest that most of the respondents prefer the Zero Waste solution to be applied in all four areas in order to survive and thrive for a Greener Philippines.

Keywords: Laudato Si', Integral Ecology, Ecological Ethics, Ecological Education, Right-Relation, Effective Pedagogy, Doable Solution

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## **Introduction**

In 1965, Pope Paul VI declares that the “Sacred Ecumenical Council has considered with care how extremely important education is in the life of man and how its influence ever grows in the social progress of this age. Indeed, the circumstances of our times have made it easier and at once more urgent to educate young people.” He also says that the “Church must be concerned with the whole of man's life, even the secular part of it insofar as it has a bearing on his heavenly calling. Therefore she has a role in the progress and development of education” (Pope Paul VI, 1965).

In 2015, Pope Francis declares that environmental education “needs educators capable of developing an ethics of ecology, and helping people, through effective pedagogy, to grow in solidarity, responsibility and compassionate care” (LS #210).

An effective pedagogy may consist of incorporating a real-life and doable solution in making learning authentic based on some key ideas from the instructional principles of constructivist pedagogy and balances it with cognitive and affective approaches where experiential learning may move the students to sympathy, empathy and action.

An experiential learning-teaching strategy does not downplay the value of typical classroom instruction; rather, it facilitates authentic learning both inside and outside the classroom through authentic tasks leading to the production of a meaningful real-life and doable solution.

## **Research Problem**

The challenge for educators today is how and when to apply the Ecological Ethics of *Laudato Si'* through an effective pedagogy and integrate the real-life and doable solutions to Filipino students' experiential learning within the Philippine context that may guide their conduct at home, in school, in community and in the work place.

The present task of this paper is to figure out which among the four solutions is preferred by the seventy environmental advocates as doable that may be integrated to students' experiential learning, namely: Zero Carbon, Zero Waste, Sustainable Water and Sustainable Transportation.

How and when the integration of the preferred doable solution to students' experiential learning effectively works will be the future task of a follow through study.

## **The Ecological Ethics of *Laudato Si'***

This paper is cross-referenced based on Fuellenbach's Life-Giving Relationships, also known as **Holistic Relationality**. It offers itself as a context of the Ecological Ethics of *Laudato Si'*, which echoes the biblical concept of justice — the Hebraic Covenant Theology.

The basic notion of **'relationality'** is referred to as the essential relations that extend in four directions or fourfold relationality, namely to God, to oneself, to neighbors (both referred to an individual and individuals who are part and parcel of a society) and to creation as a whole, while the basic notion of **'holistic'** is referred to every position of truth that we hold, which represents just one part of a larger truth (Koukl as cited in Ingles, 2006). Likewise, it presupposes Arthur Koestler's 'holon' to refer to "any entity that is itself a whole and simultaneously a part of some other whole" (Mairesse as cited in Ingles, 2006, p. 32).

In the New Testament (NT), Paul describes the Kingdom of God as, "...not a matter of food and drink, but of righteousness (justice), peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit" (New American Bible, Romans 14:17)." In the Old Testament (OT), the Hebraic Covenant Theology best translates justice concept as "Right-Relations" or "Life-Giving Relationships" (Fuellenbach, 1998). As an ethical value, this can be associated with the concepts of harmony, wholeness, caring, compassion, reciprocal regard, and mutual valuation of intrinsic worth (Acorn, 2004).

According to Fuellenbach (1998) to be just means human beings should live in life-giving relationships in the following holistic essential relations in four directions or the fourfold relationality: (1) with their fellow human beings, (2) with themselves, (3) with nature (creation) and (4) ultimately with God (p. 195).

Integral Ecology presupposes the said holistic essential relations and serves as a paradigm both for ecological ethics and ecological education. Pope Francis tells us that ecological education "seeks to restore the various levels of ecological equilibrium, establishing harmony (1) within ourselves, (2) with others, (3) with nature and other living creatures, and (4) with God" (LS #210). He also says that, "environmental education should facilitate making the leap towards the transcendent which gives ecological ethics its deepest meaning" (LS #210).

This paper is also cross-referenced with the works of a Filipino prolific writer and scholar, Florentino Hornedo. In his paper, 'Values Education in the Social Sciences,' he speaks of justice in four directions.

Hornedo (1994) claims that, "Values education is profoundly affective and teaching in a classroom "can benefit greatly from the methods of exposure and immersion and the reflective element that procedurally follows such exercises." He observes that due to the "lack of imagination on the part of many educators," the results of education are "a great amount of cognitive learning and a minimum of affective learning" (par. 43).

Hornedo (1994) explains these in greater detail: "Justice is meaningful in terms of the relationships man has and creates (1) between himself and other humans and human institutions, (2) between himself and nature, (3) between himself and himself, and (4) between himself and the Transcendent" (par. 74).

## **Relationality with Fellow Human Beings**

Hornedo (1994) claims that doing justice is to recognize the value and rights of the individuals and to give them their due: “Nutrition if they are hungry, clothing if they are naked, medicine if they are sick, education if they are ignorant, deliverance from bondage if they are oppressed, and so forth. The recognition of the rights of others means the proper rendering to them of that to which they have a right.... —But most importantly, the rights of others is to be read as one’s obligation towards them: they have rights precisely because I have obligations” (par. 75). Hornedo (2009) expands human beings relations with their fellow human beings to include institutions, unfortunately he observes that: “Rebels against the government frequently have been elevated to the status of folk heroes while the law enforcers are shown as bungling, terroristic, and corrupt. This is an indication of an anarchistic attitude, a failure to relate to the largest natural institution —the government and its agencies” (par. 76).

## **Relationality with Themselves**

It is justice to self and to society, Hornedo (1994) claims, to care for one’s development personally and professionally. It is injustice to fail to value peoples’ potentials and grow up to become burdens both to themselves and to society. Thus, every school child ought to know these facts to motivate her/him towards growth and to make her/him perseveres to learn and know more (par. 79).

## **Relationality with Nature**

Doing justice with nature, Hornedo (1994) argues, involves the promotion of the beneficence of nature for mankind. He argues that it is unjust to society to resort to hasty aggression upon nature that plagues man in the form of shortages of natural resources. What is just in dealing with nature is the provident use of natural resources for the sustenance of society’s necessities (Hornedo, 1994: par. 28).

## **Relationality with the Transcendence [God]**

The relationship of man with Transcendence, Hornedo (1994) contends, is recognized legally under the provision of law assuring freedom of belief and religious expression. He proposes that “values education needs to confront squarely the developing religious consciousness of learners, especially their growth towards tolerance and the positive appreciation of the religious culture of other people” (par. 80).

Mercado (1994) noted that relationships with nature are considered by the Filipinos as something to be in harmony with. By borrowing Hornedo’s words, he explained it further: “The traditional Filipino lived with nature. The forests and rivers were his ‘brothers.’ Their preservation and conservation was his life. Their destruction, his destruction. He had lore to teach his society this fact. When he told his children the divine beings prohibited the desecration of the forest, he was speaking with the authority of life and in the name of life, not of money” (Mercado, 1994: par. 7).

Hornedo claims (as cited in Mercado, 1994) that for a traditional Filipino preservation and conservation of nature would mean his own preservation and conservation, and their destruction, his destruction.

## **Authentic Pedagogy**

This paper is also verifies the Authentic Pedagogy with an article on making learning authentic in Lessenger Middle School, Manzo (1998) dealt with the students who saw beyond the obvious conditions of Detroit's River Rouge that impacted life in and around the water and applied what they were learning in class to real-life problems. The students' opportunity to document their observations opened the door into lessons about water and environment. Added to these hands-on activities or learning by doing or praxis-based pedagogy, students understood the reasons how oxygen, water and organism interrelate and work together. Students realized that in the past they did not know that different pollutants have different effects on the river.

Now they already knew the reasons why the river is polluted. With authentic learning activities students engaged into, they gained a deeper understanding of the scientific principles they were studying and they realized how human activities impacted the environment's intricate balance. Students were taking charge of their own learning and engaging in inquiry and projects that they cared about. As a matter of fact, these students have made presentations to the local Friends of the Rouge advocacy group about their findings. Their classroom and the river were their immediate context. Their learning environment supported collaborative construction of knowledge through social negotiation. Social interaction and collaboration are critical as they became involved in a "community of practice." It supports what Honebein (1996) referred to as embedding learning in social experience which eventually led the students to engage in an advocacy.

## **Research Design and Participants**

The paper opted for an interpretive methodology in order to "articulate and critique this understanding" (Packer, 2000) by incorporating linguistic discourse and discursive analysis, guides the research to collect, analyze and interpret data. It is acknowledged and accepted as a satisfactory method of textual investigation involving official documents (Sack, 1974, Atkinson and Coffey, 1997 and Silverman, 2001 as cited in Choo, 2005). In this paper, the official document that it refers to is *Laudato Si'*, which is the first encyclical that addresses the environment. It is cross-referenced on Fuellenbach's *Life-Giving Relationships*; Hornedo's 'Values Education in the Social Sciences' and Manzo's *Authentic Pedagogy*.

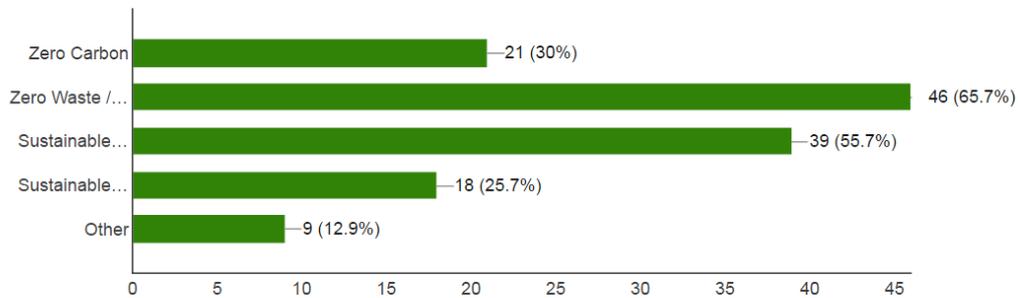
This paper also used Google Forms mail questionnaire survey conducted among environmental advocates in the Philippines. Google Forms provide a free and fast way to create an online survey. After creating a survey, respondents are invited by email. The respondents answer the questions from almost any web browser, which includes mobile smartphone and tablet browsers. The responses are collected in an online spreadsheet, which can be viewed in a single row of a spreadsheet, with each question shown in a column.

A total of 200 survey questionnaires were initially mailed out to the sample respondents, of which only 70 questionnaires were returned. Two hundred environmental advocates were emailed and invited to take the survey on how one's commitment to care and protect our environment translate to a more practical and doable solutions for a Greener Philippines, of which only seventy of them responded.

The seventy environmental advocates were asked to identify the most doable among the proposed four solutions namely: Zero Carbon, Zero Waste, Sustainable Water and Sustainable Transportation that may be applicable in any of the four areas, namely: at home, in school, in community and in the work place. The preferred doable solution will then be integrated to student's experiential learning in all of the four areas.

## Results and Discussion

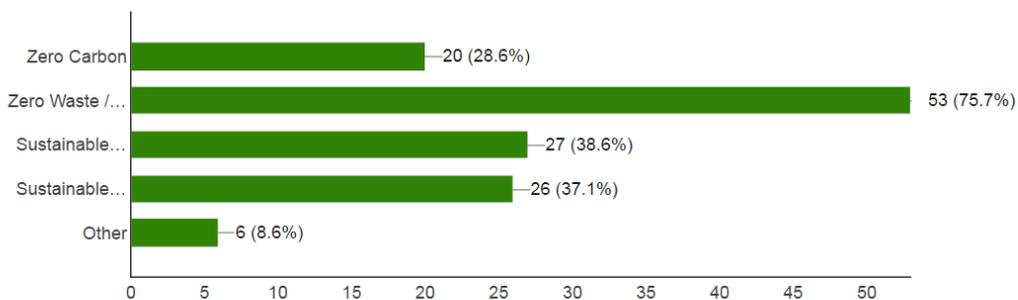
at home? (70 responses)



Graph 1: Environmental Advocates Preference of Doable Solutions 'At Home'

Representing the result "at home", the distribution of the population in the above graph (Graph 1) shows that 21 or 30% of the environmental advocates preferred Zero Carbon, 46 or 65.7% preferred Zero Waste, 39 or 55.7% preferred Sustainable Water, 18 or 25.7% preferred Sustainable Transportation and 9 or 12.9% preferred Other doable solutions.

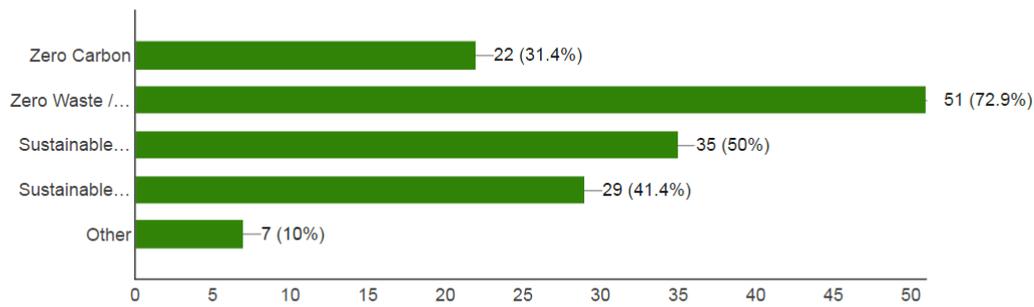
in school? (70 responses)



Graph 2: Environmental Advocates Preference of Doable Solutions 'In School'

Representing the result "in school", the distribution of the population in the above graph (Graph 2) shows that 20 or 28.6% of the environmental advocates preferred Zero Carbon, 53 or 75.7% preferred Zero Waste, 27 or 38.6% preferred Sustainable Water, 26 or 37.1% preferred Sustainable Transportation and 6 or 8.6% preferred Other doable solutions.

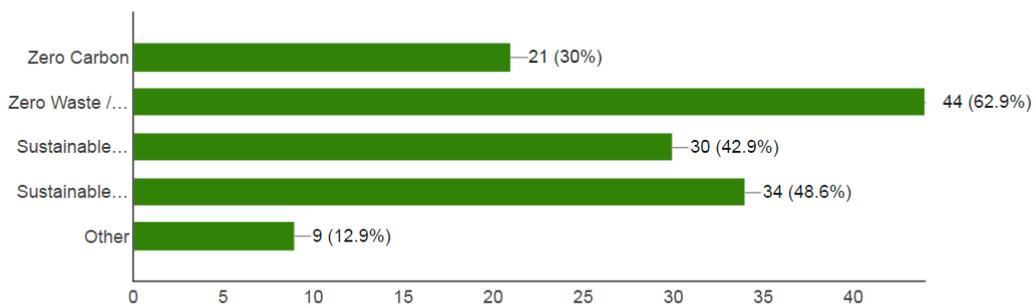
in community (parish/barangay)? (70 responses)



Graph 3: Environmental Advocates Preference of Doable Solutions ‘In Community’

Representing the result “in community”, the distribution of the population in the above graph (Graph 3) shows that 22 or 31.4% of the environmental advocates preferred Zero Carbon, 51 or 72.9% preferred Zero Waste, 35 or 50% preferred Sustainable Water, 29 or 41.4% preferred Sustainable Transportation and 7 or 10% preferred Other doable solutions.

in the work place? (70 responses)



Graph 4: Environmental Advocates Preference of Doable Solutions ‘In the Work Place’

Representing the result “in the work place”, the distribution of the population in the above graph (Graph 4) shows that 21 or 30% of the environmental advocates preferred Zero Carbon, 44 or 62.9% preferred Zero Waste, 30 or 42.9% preferred Sustainable Water, 34 or 48.6% preferred Sustainable Transportation and 9 or 12.9% preferred Other doable solutions.

## Conclusion

The preferred doable solution that should be integrated to students’ experiential learning that will be applied in any of the four areas, namely: at home, in school, in a community and in the work place can be gleaned from the data obtained from the seventy environmental advocates.

Among the doable solutions, namely: Zero Carbon, Zero Waste, Sustainable Water and Sustainable Transportation, the results of the survey showed that most of the respondents preferred the Zero Waste solution to be integrated to student's experiential learning in any of the four areas mentioned above.

Like any other research undertaking, this paper does not cover the actual application of integrating the Zero Waste as a doable solution to student's experiential learning. While most of the respondents preferred the Zero Waste solution to be applied in all the four areas, this paper sees it fit to recommend a sequel of this paper to be undertaken.

In respond and support to Pope Francis' calls for an integral ecology where educators are capable of "developing an ethics of ecology, and helping people, through effective pedagogy" (LS #210), this paper recommends a follow through study on how and when the integration of Zero Waste as a real-life and doable solution to student's experiential learning effectively works.

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