

# [OPINION] Education and science: The dream of Philippine sustainability

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*'Education is regarded as the top solution for addressing global challenges, from climate change and loss of biodiversity, to disinformation and freedom of expression'*

The road to sustainability has taken a significant detour in the form of the COVID-19 pandemic. The now year-long crisis has exposed the fragility of current socioeconomic systems when

facing environmental threats and is projected to adversely impact the development of many countries, especially developing nations such as the Philippines.

Given this context, it is imperative to assess the current perspective of citizens globally on attaining sustainable development. As stakeholders to the type of present and future being shaped by the decisions and actions of today, their voices are most important for determining how humankind will overcome challenges such as COVID-19 and ensure that no one is left behind.

#### **Where the world stands**

A recent UNESCO survey revealed that climate change and loss of biodiversity was seen across all regions as the gravest global challenge against a peaceful society by 2030. Respondents identified among their top concerns under this challenge increasing natural disasters and extreme weather events, loss of biodiversity and impact on people, and pollution of the ocean and rising sea levels.

Among the next most highlighted global challenges are violence and conflict, discrimination and inequality, lack of food, water, and housing, and health and disease. While international cooperation is seen as a necessity for addressing these issues, only 25% of the respondents expressed that they were confident about the success of global actions.

Education is regarded as the top solution for addressing global challenges, from climate change and loss of biodiversity, to disinformation and freedom of expression. This reflects a common global view regarding the significance of education not only for its own value, but also as a means to address the impacts of various issues.

This recognition comes at a time when the COVID-19 pandemic has effectively changed the learning modalities for up to 1.6 billion students worldwide and placed tremendous burden on teachers. Consequently, education and learning and the relationship between humans and nature emerged as the two areas of society that needs the most rethinking in light of the health crisis.

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