

■ HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH AND POLICY REFORM PROGRAM

THE STATE OF ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING EDUCATION IN THE PHILIPPINES AFTER RA NO. 10587

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ABSTRACT

The regulation of the environmental planning profession in the Philippines was amended in 2013 through Republic Act (RA) No. 10587 (Environmental Planning Act of 2013). RA No. 10587 repealed Presidential Decree (PD) No. 1308 in terms of the requirements for registration and licensure for environmental planners. Unlicensed planners in government positions needed to pursue higher education in environmental planning to qualify for the Environmental Planning Licensure Examination (EPLE).

This policy brief aims to describe the state of environmental planning education in the Philippines after the passage of RA No. 10587. Through literature review and interviews, this study outlines the successes, challenges, and opportunities for environmental planning education in the Philippines.

INTRODUCTION

Republic Act (RA) No. 10587, which was passed in 2013, added the requirement of possessing a diploma or degree in environmental planning to qualify for the Environmental Planning Licensure Examination (EPLE). Previously, Presidential Decree (PD) No. 1308 allowed holders of degrees in allied professions and experienced planning professionals to take the professional licensure examination in environmental planning. There are around 6,300 registered and licensed environmental

planners in the Philippines as of 2021 (Sandalo, Rola, and Atienza 2022).

Before the passage of RA No. 10587, Environmental Planning programs were mostly contained in the University of the Philippines (UP) System (Alli 2018; Sandalo, Rola, and Atienza 2022). The UP established an Institute of Planning in 1965; this Institute is now the School of Urban and Regional Planning in UP Diliman. In

1983, upon the conversion of the UP Los Baños Institute of Human Ecology into the UP Los Baños College of Human Ecology, the College also revised its curriculum and offered human settlements planning as a major field of specialization in its BS Human Ecology program. Liceo de Cagayan University is a private university that has started offering Environmental Planning program in 2012. Miriam College has also been offering its Environmental Planning and Management program before the passage of RA No. 10587.

As of writing, there are at least 17 educational institutions that offer environmental planning courses in the undergraduate and graduate levels (See Table 1).

This policy brief aims to describe the state of environmental planning education in the Philippines after the passage of RA No. 10587 from the perspective of higher education institutions (HEIs). Through a form interview, HEIs expressed the challenges and opportunities that they perceive for environmental planning education in the Philippines, considering the provisions of RA No. 10587.¹

POLICIES, STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR THE BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING PROGRAM

CHED Memorandum Order 2017-60 states the minimum standards for higher education institutions that desire to offer baccalaureate programs in Environmental Planning. The Order also includes the minimum set of program outcomes and performance indicators program that graduates of BS Environmental Planning programs should meet. Additionally, the Order outlines the qualification requirements of Department Head and Faculty for BS Environmental Planning programs.

METHODOLOGY

The policy brief illustrates the successes, challenges, and opportunities for environmental planning education in the Philippines through literature review and form interviews.

References reviewed included books, website articles, and papers (both peer-reviewed and grey literature) about environmental planning education after 2013.

The form interviews were sent to higher education institutions (HEIs) that offer environmental planning courses. Themes from responses to the form interviews were analyzed to describe the state of environmental planning education in the Philippines. The form contained the following questions:

1. Describe the history of your Environmental Planning program.
 - a. Foundation Year
 - b. Development timeline
 - c. If you offered an environmental planning program before RA No. 10587, how did the law affect your enrollment rates?
2. What are the primary challenges that your Environmental Planning program is facing?
3. What are the primary opportunities that you see in your Environmental Planning program?
4. How do you plan to develop your Environmental Planning program to satisfy the mandate of RA No. 10587?

RESULTS

HEIs that offer Environmental Planning programs

At least 17 HEIs in the Philippines offer Environmental Planning programs in different levels. As of writing, only 9 regions of the Philippines have institutions that offer Environmental Planning programs (Table 1). Annex 1 lists all HEIs in the Philippines that offer Environmental Planning programs.

¹ The Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs of Miriam College declined request for interview.

TABLE 1. REGIONS WITH HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS OFFERING ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING COURSES

REGION	NUMBER OF HEIs THAT OFFER ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING PROGRAMS PER LEVEL			
	BACHELOR	DIPLOMA	MASTER	DOCTORAL
CAR	1	0	2	0
I	1	0	1	0
III	0	1	0	0
IV-A	1	1	1	0
NCR	4	1	4	3
VII	2	2	1	0
X	0	0	1	0
XI	0	1	2	0
XII	1	0	0	0
Grand Total	10	6	12	3

■ Source: Author's research; Encila (2022)

Profile of Participant HEIs

Ten higher education institutions (HEIs) responded to the form interviews ("Participant HEIs"). Table 2 summarizes the profile of the Participant HEIs. Of the 10 Participant HEIs, four (4) have offered EPLE-qualifying programs before the passage of RA No. 10587, three of which are within the UP System, and one is a private HEI. One Participant HEI offers Environmental Science programs that qualified for the EPLE pre-RA No. 10587 and desires to offer Environmental Planning programs.

TABLE 2. "PARTICIPANT HEIs" THAT RESPONDED TO THE FORM INTERVIEWS FOR THIS STUDY

HEI	PROGRAMS OFFERED THAT QUALIFY FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING LICENSURE EXAM	FIRST IMPLEMENTATION OF ENP-RELATED PROGRAM
College of Human Ecology (UP Los Baños)	BS Human Ecology major in Human Settlements Planning	1974
PUP College of Architecture, Design, and the Built Environment	BS Environmental Planning	AY 2021–2022*
Philippine Christian University	Master in Management Major in Environmental Planning	AY 2020–2021*
Liceo de Cagayan University	Master of Management in Environmental Planning and Management	2012
University of San Carlos	BS Environmental Planning Master in Urban Planning	AY 2015–2016*
UP Visayas (Iloilo)	Diploma in Urban and Regional Planning	1997
UP Mindanao	Diploma in Urban and Regional Planning Master of Arts in Urban and Regional Planning	1997, suspended in 2005, re-offered in AY 2016–2017
University of the Cordilleras	BS Environmental Planning	AY 2020–2021*
Philippine Women's University**	None	Not applicable

*After passage of RA 10587 in 2013

**Through personal correspondence, the Program Head of the Environmental Science Program of the Philippine Women's University expressed interest in developing an Environmental Planning program that qualifies for the Environmental Planning Licensure Exam (EPL). Before the lapse of the five-year provision of RA No. 10587 for non-holders of environmental planning degrees, PWU graduates of Environmental Science and Environmental Management qualified and passed the EPL.

EFFECT OF RA NO. 10587 ON ENROLLMENT IN PRE-EXISTING ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING PROGRAMS

All four Participant HEIs that had Environmental Planning programs before the passage of RA No. 10587 expressed that enrollment count increased after the effectivity of the law. Of these four, only Liceo de Cagayan University is a private university. The Department of Architecture of UP Mindanao had to set a quota for enrollments considering faculty load and logistical concerns.

CHALLENGES

All 4 Participant HEIs that started offering Environmental Planning programs after the passage of RA No. 10587 cited low to no enrollment. The University of Cordilleras cited that only 2–3 students enrolled in their BS Environmental Planning program. The University of San Carlos, which started offering the program in 2015, relates the zero enrollment in their BS Environmental Planning program with the possibility that prospective students fail to understand the job opportunities of an environmental planner. Relatedly, USC cites that students in their Master in Urban Planning program struggle to finish the program because of employment commitments.

The unavailability of full-time faculty members was also identified by two Participant HEIs: Philippine Christian University and UP Visayas – Iloilo. There is only one full-time faculty member under the Diploma in Urban and Regional Planning (DURP) Program of UPV-Iloilo. Their DURP Program also has had “no Faculty Coordinator since 2015 who will [focus] on [curriculum development] (response from interview form).”

UP Los Baños College of Human Ecology (UPLB-CHE) cites low awareness that their Bachelor of Science in Human Ecology (BSHE) degree qualifies for the Environmental Planning Licensure Exam. Even Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) evaluators in Lucena City were unaware that their BSHE degree qualifies for the EPLE.

Issues in equipment and software needs and lack of administrative support were also cited by two Participant HEIs. According to the respondent for PCU, “the University offers many programs [leading] to issues

in administrative and academic support.” The PCU respondent mentions that administrative support staff should include registration, enrollment, library, and finance. CHED CMO 2017-60 details requirements for laboratory, studio, physical facilities, and library. The sample program of study for BS EP also includes courses on geographic information systems, remote sensing and GPS, and surveying.

The lapse of the five-year provision of RA No. 10587 that allowed non-Environmental Planning-degree holders to take the EPLE was mentioned by the Philippine Women’s University. PWU offers an Environmental Science program and is planning to offer an Environmental Planning program.

OPPORTUNITIES

Participant HEIs identified enhancements to program delivery as opportunities for their Environmental Planning programs.

UPLB-CHE identified service-learning as an opportunity for their program. Their graduates can earn experience in local government planning through their Technical Assistance Program in Human Settlements Planning. Service-learning was also identified by faculty members of the UP Department of Geography as an important component of their curriculum (Saguin et al. 2022)

Liceo de Cagayan University expressed the desire to align their research agenda with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). The SDGs, which were established by the United Nations in 2015, are 17 “ambitious objectives and targets to end extreme poverty and hunger, fight inequality and injustice, and tackle climate change, by 2030” (Blazhevskaya 2020).

PLANS FOR DEVELOPING PROGRAM

Participant HEIs that already offer an Environmental Planning program expressed plans to develop programs for other levels. University of San Carlos shared plans to develop a posgraduate diploma program for local government planners from their Master in Urban Planning program. As of writing, USC offers the following: (1) Bachelor of Science in Environmental Planning and, (2) Master in Urban Planning. UP Visayas – Iloilo also shared plans to offer bachelor’s and master’s

programs in Environmental Planning. As of writing, UPV-Iloilo offers a postgraduate diploma program in Urban and Regional Planning.

Curriculum revisions are also planned by two Participant HEIs. PCU plans to revise their curriculum to ensure alignment with CHED CMO 2017-60. UPV-Iloilo hopes to enhance their DURP curriculum in terms of course sequence.

DISCUSSION

- Universities outside the UP System offered Environmental Planning programs, particularly BS Environmental Planning programs, after the passage of RA No. 10587.

Before the passage of the bill, Environmental Planning programs were mostly offered within the University of the Philippines System (Tutor, Orbeta, Jr., and Miraflor 2021; Sandalo, Rola, and Atienza 2022). Liceo de Cagayan University started offering Master of Management in Environmental Planning and Management in 2012. After the passage of RA No. 10587, state and private HEIs started developing Environmental Planning programs based on CHED CMO 60 (Alli 2018).

- Enrollment in programs offered within the UP System increased, but BS EnP courses offered by private institutions after RA No. 10587 experienced low to no enrollment.

Prospective enrollees have little knowledge about the Environmental Planning profession, according to the respondent from University of San Carlos. RA No. 10587 outlines the scope of practice of Environmental Planners. A tracer study can be conducted to assess the employability of graduates of Environmental Planning (similar to Tutor, Orbeta, Jr., and Miraflor 2021). The Philippine Institute of Environmental Planners (PIEP), as the accredited professional organization for environmental planning, can lead the promotion and matching of graduates with concerned local government units (LGUs). The Board of Environmental Planning has a primer about the Environmental Planning profession (Professional Regulation Commission, n.d.).

As observed from author's personal experience, many potential enrollees are local government staff

who already have undergraduate degrees. As such, they may desire graduate programs that are offered in their local institutions or online. A separate study on potential enrollees can profile the market for different levels (i.e., undergraduate, postgraduate diploma, master's) of Environmental Planning programs.

- Common challenges for Participant HEIs are faculty membership and equipment for learning.

The lack of full-time faculty members hinders the implementation and development of the respective programs of three Participant HEIs. A separate study on why SUCs have difficulty recruiting full-time faculty members is recommended.

- An opportunity for HEIs is to offer distance learning programs for postgraduate diploma in Environmental Planning.

Offering distance learning programs can help employed Environmental Planners to complete postgraduate diploma programs required for the Environmental Planning Licensure Exam. The DLUP program of UPOU is online, except for a face-to-face fieldwork. Planners in the local government are continuously seeking programs that can qualify them for the Environmental Planning Licensure Exam. Distance learning can also cater students with other commitments like work and family.

The fully online Master of Management major in Environmental Planning program of the Philippine Christian University cites five graduates in their first batch of licensure exam takers. These five took the 2022 Environmental Planning Licensure Examination; one passed the EPLE.

- HEIs in regions without local access to Environmental Planning programs ("concern regions") should be tapped by the PIEP and CHED.

Adolfo Encila (2022) highlighted the absence of accessible Environmental Planning programs as a potential problem for producing future environmental planners. Developing Environmental Planning programs in SUCs located in concern regions is critical to ensure the future of the Environmental Planning profession.

HEIs can also assess the qualification of their current offerings with the requirements of RA No. 10587 and its implementing rules. For example, the CLSU offers graduate programs in rural development (MS and PhD in Rural Development) that may qualify for the EPLE, if these are certified approved by the PRC Board of Environmental Planning.

CONCLUSION

The passage of Republic Act No. 10587 required additional academic qualifications for the Environmental Planning Licensure Examination (EPL). Pre-existing Environmental Planning programs before the bill's passage, which were offered mostly on the graduate level and within the University of the Philippines (UP) System, experienced increase in enrollments. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the Philippines outside the UP System started to offer Bachelor of Science degrees in Environmental Planning, but experienced low enrollment rates and challenges on administrative needs. Faculty membership and lack of learning equipment are common problems for HEIs. Accessible Environmental Planning programs are necessary for the advancement of the Environmental Planning profession. Offering Environmental Planning programs in concern regions and offering distance learning are potential strategies.

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ANNEX 1.

HEIs in the Philippines that offer Environmental Planning Programs

The table includes programs that (1) HEIs are offering or have offered as of December 2022 and (2) have been verified to qualify graduates for the Environmental Planning Licensure Exam after lapse of the five-year provision of RA 10587.

HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION	ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING PROGRAMS OFFERED			
	BACHELOR'S DEGREES	POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMA	MASTER'S DEGREES	DOCTORATE DEGREES
Batangas State University			Master in Urban Planning and Design	
Central Luzon State University		Diploma in Land Use Planning		
Holy Name University		Executive Diploma in Urban and Regional Development		
Liceo de Cagayan University			Master of Management in Environmental Planning and Management	
Mapúa University	Bachelor of Science in Environmental Planning			
MHAM College Inc.	Bachelor of Science in Environmental Planning, Major in Disaster Risk Management			
Miriam College	Bachelor of Science in Environmental Planning and Management		Master in Environmental Planning	Ph.D. in Environmental Planning Management and Studies
National University-Manila	BS Environmental Planning			
Notre Dame of Dadiangas University	Bachelor of Science in Environmental Planning		Master in Management Major in Environmental Planning	
Philippine Christian University				
PUP College of Architecture, Design and the Built Environment	5-year combined program for BS and MS degree in Environmental Planning			
Saint Louis University Main Campus			Master of Arts in Environmental and Habitat Planning	
University of Mindanao			Master in Environmental Planning	
University of San Carlos	BS Environmental Planning			
University of the Cordilleras	Bachelor of Science in Environmental Planning			

HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION	ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING PROGRAMS OFFERED			
	BACHELOR'S DEGREES	POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMA	MASTER'S DEGREES	DOCTORATE DEGREES
University of the Philippines Mindanao		Diploma in Urban and Regional Planning	Master of Arts in Urban and Regional Planning	
UP Open University		Diploma in Land Use Planning		
UP School of Urban and Regional Planning		Diploma in Urban and Regional Planning	Master of Arts in Urban and Regional Planning Master of Science in Regional Development Planning	Doctor of Philosophy in Urban and Regional Planning
UP Visayas – Iloilo		Diploma in Urban and Regional Planning		
UPLB College of Human Ecology	BS Human Ecology, major in Human Settlements Planning			
Benguet State University			Master in Urban Management	
University of Northern Philippines	5-year combined program for BS and MS degrees in Environmental Planning			

Partido State University has a permit to offer Bachelor of Science in Environmental Planning and will start offering it in 2023.²

² Information obtained by author during Philippine Institute of Environmental Planning (PIEP) National Convention 2022.

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