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Effective teaching strategies for making the ES concept relevant for society

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Abstract:

The ecosystem services (ES) concept at its very basis, as the benefits that nature provides to people, is clear and powerful. However, teaching ES poses challenges for teachers and students who apply their knowledge in practice and interact with societal actors and diverse stakeholders. Teaching at the university level the ES concept needs to be addressed in a clear and effective way so that the concept and its implications may become better mainstreamed and implemented among different societal groups. To do so, we believe that 1) a better understanding of the ES concept can be achieved using participatory collaborative teaching methods in the classroom that improve students teaching and learning processes; and 2) it is important to design teaching formats that prepare students to apply the ES knowledge in practice and interact with societal actors and diverse stakeholders. Successful uptake of the ES concept, therefore, will enhance understanding by different governance actors, facilitate social change in the approach to ecosystems and thus, foster a better implementation of ES concept in different governance frameworks.

In this session, we focus on the aspect of teaching ES to the younger generations at the university level. University students are e.g. future teachers, policy makers or scientists. The university provides an exceptional context to route the ES concept to young people and thereafter to the whole society.



The ES concept at its very basis is intuitive. The original idea of ES, as the benefits that nature provides to people, is clear and powerful. Therefore, teaching ES in a simple and practical way in order to guarantee its correct dissemination and implementation is fundamental. This allows students coming from different backgrounds to have fruitful dialogues with the rest of the society that may lead to find joint solutions to common socio-ecological problems. We will share experiences on how to teach the theoretical background of the ES concept using active and participatory methods, leading to a dialogue between different actors. Afterwards, we will identify ways to operationalize the ES concept based on practical teaching experiences of selected fields or backgrounds (architects, urbanists, environmental specialists, teachers, geographers), and making students interact with stakeholders and practitioners. Such teaching operationalizations of the ES concept are crucial to prepare students for their future professional challenges.

The interaction between students and people from outside the university can initiate mutual learning and raise awareness of ES concept in society. Based on a well-developed teaching design, students not only gain many practical and soft skills, but also act as multipliers of the ES concept. The ES concept has the advantage that it addresses all parts of society and can be used as a door opener to raise people awareness. Students need to develop communication skills on the relevance of ES, which should be part of the teaching-learning process in the mentioned both steps. Research in this field is currently very limited and should focus on how to share good practice examples on teaching the ES at university level, and more importantly, on assessing the ES teaching effectiveness. We encourage presentations addressing the following questions:

- How to integrate the ES concept in different subjects at the university level and in other formal and informal educational levels?
- How to operationalize the ES concept within university teaching experiences?
- What kind of methods could be implemented to teach the ES concept? What has worked and what has not worked out?
- How can we assess the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process?

Goals and objectives of the session:

The general aim of the session is to share and discuss experiences on teaching the ES concept at the university level. Our aim is to propose ways to facilitate mainstreaming the ES concept: both, innovative experiences that deal with how to teach the concept itself, and implementation experience that make students apply the concept working with stakeholders. We propose to develop - together with the session participants - evaluation methods of the teaching success related to ES concept at the university level. Our specific goals are:

- Support networking of lecturers in the Ecosystem Services community.
- Provide a platform for exchange of innovative teaching approaches to a broader audience.
- Discuss and share assessing methods of the effectiveness of the ES teaching and learning process

Planned output / Deliverables:

Our planned output and deliverables are based on participants' interest and involvement. We plan to encourage participants to the following medium and long-term steps:

1. Overview of teaching formats and methodological advances in ES and identifying interesting effective positive experiences.
2. Discussion on how to develop indicators of the teaching effectiveness together with session participants.
3. Discussion about the possibility to establish a new ESP working group related to Ecosystem Services education. This would include all levels of formal education



(kindergarten, primary, secondary, and high school and university level) and also informal education of citizens and stakeholders.

4. Possible joint research application.
5. Joint scientific paper.

Open or closed session for abstract submission:

Yes, I allow any abstract to be submitted to my session for review

Related to ESP Working Group/National Network:

Other