

Foreword

Catching Up and Building Back Better from Learning Losses

As COVID-19 disrupts education systems around the world, the impacts and outcomes of school closures and remote learning are far-reaching and complex (Molato-Gayares et al., 2022; UNICEF, UNESCO, World Bank, 2022). One of the most pressing concerns is the possibility or even increase in learning losses due to school closures, or inadequate instruction. Generally, learning loss may be described as the loss of knowledge and skills when students are not in school (Bennett, 2021). In fact, about two-thirds of the academic year may have been lost as 800 million students in 79 countries still face disruption in their academic progress (Bennett, 2021; Laughlin, 2021; Molato-Gayares et al., 2022; Singh, Romero, & Muralidharan, 2022). Experts recognize that prolonging learning losses may widen existing gaps in learning. Such conditions affect the disadvantaged, marginalized, and those in developing countries, hence, the need for urgent recovery to prevent lasting impacts (Harmey & Moss, 2021; Laughlin, 2021; Molato-Gayares et al., 2022; UNICEF, UNESCO, World Bank, 2022). The first step to recovery of learning is testing and assessing how much knowledge was lost and where to restart instruction (Magno, 2022; Molato-Gayares et al., 2022; UNICEF, UNESCO, World Bank, 2022; Welcome, 2021).

This year's issue of *The Normal Lights* includes eight articles that highlight the concept of building back better from learning losses. Five of these eight articles focus on assessment in different forms with the first two articles featuring quantitative assessment studies. The first article

tested if academic self-efficacy (ASE) may be considered a strong determinant of adaptive academic behaviors using structural equation modeling (SEM). Espanola (2022) found that self-efficacy for self- and co-regulated learning (SESCoRL) and the self-efficacy for peer help-seeking (SEPHS) were proximal predictors of instrumental peer help-seeking. Apparently, assessment within the learning recovery period may not only focus on learners. Santos and Ramirez (2022) used causal research to determine the effect of environmental knowledge and awareness (EKA) on the green behavior (GB) of public elementary teachers. The study revealed that the more knowledgeable and aware the teachers are about the environment, the more teachers participate in environmentally friendly practices and programs of the schools. Such findings may introduce readiness of teachers to cope with learning recovery programs that governments will institute. The next set of assessment studies worked on qualitative data. Candilas, Agcito, and Escalona (2022) used phenomenological inquiry to extract the essence of students' 'silence' in online learning. Their data revealed that silence for graduate school students means emotional exhaustion and lack of academic preparedness due to several factors which reflect their struggles in online learning. Similarly, Payusan, Arrofo, Codilla, Gaco, Dakay, Cabanilla, and Cortes (2022) revealed that working students tend to have a hard time managing being a student and a worker which negatively impacts their academic performances. Tan and Fajardo (2022) determined the reading strategies of elementary students in comprehending digital texts and found that of the three types of online reading strategies (global, problem-solving, and support), they use support strategies more than the other types. Proficient digital readers highly use reading strategies across the three types, while less-proficient digital readers employ the strategies moderately. However, most participants showed a lack of proficiency in digital reading skills.

In taking a proactive approach to address the challenges posed by the pandemic, educators and policymakers work to minimize the impact of school closures and promote learning recovery. This approach may be done by providing targeted support and interventions for students who have been most affected by the pandemic. Furthermore, such approaches may include leveraging technology and other resources to ensure that all students have access to high-quality instruction (Arundel et al., 2022; Reilly, 2022). Many countries (e.g., India, Indonesia, USA, and other European countries) have initiated and staged recovery plans using different frameworks that accommodate assessment as the initial step (Blad, 2022; Molato-Gayares et al., 2022; UNICEF, UNESCO, World Bank, 2022). Learning recovery entails the following: re-engaging of students and families, addressing core learning needs, building capacity, supporting multiple stakeholders, enabling local leadership and solutions, providing for differentiated approach, and systemic learning and adjusting policy (Learning Recovery: Time for Action, 2021; Magno, 2022; UNICEF, UNESCO, World Bank, 2022).

The next set of articles in this year's issue of *The Normal Lights* underscore development and assessment of materials, frameworks, and programs which may be considered as good inputs to help in learning recovery in the country. These articles feature appraisal of materials and programs implemented during the pandemic. Huguerra's and Cacho's (2022) case research is a transition from assessment to development of reading strategies for teachers to improve school-based reading intervention. In a case study, their study revealed that the teachers' reading objectives and strategies focused mainly on the development of word reading skills while providing little to no attention to the improvement of comprehension skills. The study suggests that piloted reading materials may be contextualized to grade-level appropriateness and content-sensitivity to diverse learners.

The second article explored parents' perceptions of a flexible learning program in one laboratory school in Metro Manila. Espejo (2022) found that facilitation of instruction afforded opportunities for active participation, independent learning, and production of creative outputs. The study further emphasized that online communication tools can be maximized to provide feedback, monitor learners' status, and set up consultation time. Erfe and Ancho (2022) explored the gender-fair music education practices in three school types. The study revealed 10 practices labeled as GENDER-FAIR which can be used as foundation to substantiate gender-fair music education in junior high schools (Erfe & Ancho, 2022). The study acknowledged that educational institutions do their part of promoting and reinforcing gender equality and equity to embrace inclusivity in education.

Ultimately, addressing learning losses and promoting learning recovery requires a collaborative effort from all stakeholders, including teachers, students, parents, and policymakers. By working together, we can ensure that all students have the opportunity to reach their full potential and succeed in the face of unprecedented challenges.

The Editor

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