Touching varied elements for Quality Education
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Research-based articles have guided scientific readers in their search for truth and understanding about the world they live in through the veracity and dedication that come with creating academic literature. Particularly for Philippine education, *The Normal Lights* has continuously provided substantial researches and newfound knowledge for use of teachers and those who seek to quench their thirst for ideas. In this issue, we offer 10 distinguished research articles, meticulously produced with varying intentions and inspirations for their conduct. Out of the 10 articles, half are single-authored ones, four are multiple-authored articles (teams of three), and one, a co-authored paper.

In terms of coverage, three of the articles similarly looked into reading skills, techniques, and comprehension of elementary children. The remaining seven are: on peace education framework and its relevance; an eye-opening article on the misalignment of student teaching programs (STPs) of selected teacher education institutions (TEIs) with professional standards for teachers; definition and achievement of “academic success” based on the American School Counselors Association (ASCA) academic development standards; a useful instructional framework for teaching Abstract Algebra online; parental involvement in primary and secondary education; the significance of spiritual intelligence among Philippine Normal University pre-service students; and the attainment of intergroup forgiveness through recategorization and emergence of a superior identity.

Academic reading skills are essential in filtering and processing information especially for the future generations who seem to be reliant on modern technology.
In one study, the reading interests of Grade 5 male students were describe and explored. Children, especially boys, have varying reading preferences. Through this endeavor, book selection criteria was developed which can be used by teachers as a guide in selecting reading texts that capture students’ reading interests.

Still on reading, an effective attempt was made to teach history through a method proposed allowing elementary Grade 6 pupils to “read like a historian,” engaging them in the exercise of historical inquiry. This method seemingly is applicable to college and graduate students, yet by narrowing the scope and focusing on investigative skills and reading strategies that value credible sourcing of information and contextualizing, the young student-participants were able to view an event through different perspectives, which indeed is an effective way of verifying the truth as historical accounts may be biased. This reminds us of the importance of processing and understanding presented information.

Developing an understanding and gaining meaning from what is read best describes comprehension. One of the articles is about assessment of Grade 4 pupils’ comprehension levels in reading Filipino texts vis-a-vis text (expository and narrative) and test (informal reading inventory, cloze test, and retelling) types. The study proved the need for multiple assessments in measuring comprehension since comprehension levels, as revealed, correlate with test types.

As a prelude to the description of the other articles in this issue, we would like to say that the scope of the academic papers in this issue also varies - from researches on basic education to developmental studies on teacher education. We encompass all levels, from pedagogy to adragogy, as education never ceases to exist even for teachers. In our field, we continue to learn new tricks from peers, our environment,
our students, and from formal educational institutions. We strive to be globally competitive and earn as many degrees, merits, and accolades along the way. More substantial, though, is our accumulation of knowledge than any of our physical achievements.

Teacher education institutions (TEIs) and UNESCO Associated Schools Project Network (ASPnet) in the Philippines recognize the importance of peace education in influencing and fostering a peaceful natural world, as indicated in one of our articles. Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “peace cannot be achieved through violence; it can only be attained through understanding.” As such, the respondents of the study were keen on considering peace education in hopes of resolving violence, caring for the environment, recognizing and respecting human rights, achieving personal peace, strengthening cultural solidarity, engaging in dialogues, analyzing conflicts, and creating resolutions. Ideally appealing but we are yet to see the fruition of utilization of peace education.

The National Competency-Based Teacher Standards (NCBTS) serves as the guide for uniformity of educational programs in the Philippines. An analysis of the different Student Teaching Programs (STPs) of selected TEIs in Metro Manila in accordance with the NCBTS verifies their alignment or misalignment, which can pave the way to refining and improving existing programs. In effect, a standards-based pre-service teacher education curriculum, STPs, and performance appraisal system for practice teachers are expected. This redounds to preparation of our graduates to become teachers of ideal calibre.

Tertiary education proves to be not a clear road; there are existing barriers to success, one of which is poverty. Yet, being “financially-challenged” is not a hindrance to pursuing academic success, as demonstrated by one of our articles.
Using the American School Counselors Association (ASCA) academic development standards, the study described academic success among students who were from low-income families and chose education as their course. They made use of what were readily available to them in order to achieve “academic success.” In this study, knowledge, skills, and more importantly, attitude were found to be contributory factors to academic success. The implication of this study is the sheer motivation that comes along with the success stories of individuals which may be used by teachers and guidance counselors to understand students of similar background and guide them in their journey towards success.

Technology has made it possible to neglect physical constraints of time and distance by creating a virtual environment or classroom. In mathematics education involving analytic procedural concepts and methods, online teaching has bridged and connected learners divided by space, and made knowledge readily available. One of our researchers documented the instructional plan for teaching Abstract Algebra online which used very specific softwares and technologies in assessing students’ background knowledge, technical skills, and resources used. The major advantage in using these technologies is interactivity, along with the prompt feedback that comes with it. The system paved the way to developing a framework for online Abstract Algebra teaching.

The study on parental involvement reminds us that the responsibility of teaching children is shouldered not only by professional teachers but also by everyone who has acquired wisdom in this world. We teach our children to prepare them for what lies ahead, imparting lessons learned from mistakes, so they may be able to avoid them. We do such because we would like to produce a more conscious and creative generation. Indeed, the importance of parental
involvement in the education of the youth cannot be denied. We often consider teachers as “surrogate parents,” but we ought to recognize that parents highly contribute to the protection and nurturance of children in their development as individuals. Being a parent goes beyond the contribution of genetic material to one’s offspring; it is more about the role of being a caretaker providing the needs of the child. Noteworthy is said in the study’s findings which showed that most parents are supportive and actively involved in their children’s academic and extracurricular activities, and even in extending services as members of the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA).

In contrast to Howard Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligences, the article on spiritual intelligence (SI) espoused that SI relying on spirituality as opposed to religiosity serves as guide for the existence of other intelligences, as it is based on self-awareness and adaptive mechanisms. Spiritual intelligence, as a philosophical idea, will be of help for pre-service teachers and for facilitation of solving day-to-day problems among people. One of its major criticisms, though, relates to quantifiable measures. Some argued that spiritual intelligence is synonymous with existential intelligence. Nevertheless, the Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory (SISRI) measuring the four core abilities of Spiritual Intelligence (Critical Existential Thinking, Personal Meaning Production, Transcendental Awareness, and Conscious State Expansion) developed by David King, was utilized in the said descriptive study which delved into the level of spiritual intelligence of students by faculties, majorships, and sex. It was found out that, generally, spiritual intelligence, despite being relatively new, is high among the respondents.

For those who are unfamiliar with the sociological theory of common ingroup identities (Dovidio, 2012),
one of the articles featured in this issue shares that this is a model which aims to identify causes and outcomes of recategorization to eliminate our bias and favoritism towards groups for which “we belong.” Recategorization enables changing our views towards the outgroup by incorporating ourselves to the rest of the group. Relatability is evident when there is commonality among groups, and this will be a challenge for individuals who are only aware of the differences being highlighted between groups. The choice of groups studied in the article is of great interest as respondents were coming from different historical experiences: the cohort group composed of individuals who experienced martial law and those who were born after martial law with no first-hand experience of such event. As to how intergroup forgiveness is achieved through recognition of a common identity is definitely worth the read.

These articles are presented for academic readers in order to reveal much of the authors’ preferences and expertise as well as share what they value. Reading them doesn’t differ much with conversing and listening to our colleagues. It is just that their words are written rather than spoken; thus, we use our eyes rather than our ears to listen. The texts may be devoid of facial expressions and other visual cues. However, academic literature is never bland nor is it stripped off of creativity; any good article requires fluidity in narratives and storytelling. That the articles in this issue have been written allows the transfer of the very same thoughts into the future for interested readers - makes the work somewhat eternal.