

Foreword

Sustaining Quality in the New Normal

Amidst the current situation where everyone faces significant changes in all sorts of activities (teaching and learning, research, recreation, and even survival), all of us seek to sustain quality in everything we traditionally engage in. We also strive to pursue quality in the new endeavors we are about to partake as brought about by the recent events. Our 14th issue this June 2020 includes 10 articles crafted by esteemed authors during this time of transition to what everyone calls, “the new normal”. We emphasize that these articles represent the concept of quality amidst adversity. Themed as such, we categorize that the 10 articles present how authors sustain quality in the education domain, in the curriculum, in the process through pedagogy and tools, and what may be thought of as plans and activities within “the new normal”.

One of our articles (Tan, Aca-ac, Baes, Balbuena, Justiniani, & Laoagan, 2020) focused on quality in education, particularly in higher education. This article explored quality higher education (HE) from the perspective of various stakeholders, namely, the educators, employers, and students. The researchers found that stakeholders based their perception of quality HE through the relevance of curriculum and quality of graduates. The quality of the educators, availability of resources, students’ ability and willingness to learn new knowledge and skills on their own, and societal impact also affect the perceived quality of the HEIs. Their vision includes collaboration with industry for their resources in sustaining quality in HE.

The next three articles articulate quality in the curriculum. The first study (Saranza, 2020) emphasized the idea of curriculum quality through context. She believed in strengthening the “hubness” of the campus where she works by integrating multicultural concepts to the multicultural teacher education program. She found such as lacking in the current teacher education program, and that the indigenous group is not well represented in different campus activities. Her take was to have campus policies on multicultural infusion in the different campus activities which would encompass teaching and learning, and the curriculum. The second of this set for quality in curriculum focuses on

retrospective evaluation of program (science education) through a tracer study (Andres, Rogayan, & Reusia, 2020) in terms of adequacy and relevance. Although a positive rating emerged for the 10 program areas, the researchers believe that a curriculum review may better align the program to the fourth industrial revolution landscape in order to produce industry-ready and globally-competitive science educators. The third of this set for quality in curriculum emphasizes student welfare and development through an analysis of autobiographical narratives of students who opt to attend evening classes (and work during daytime) due to financial incapability. Noval (2020) found that the most common challenges faced by evening class students were time management, fatigue or stress and school work. His findings aim to promote a deeper understanding toward the condition of evening class students to inform stakeholders for policy input geared towards inclusive quality education for all.

The next four in our set exude that quality may be achievable through pedagogy and teaching and learning tools. The first two in our list are quite within the bounds of traditional education before this thing called “new normal”. But then findings of these two researchers may inform how well we can use them in remote education and home-based learning. Subia (2020) explored the benefits assimilated by former chess university varsities and was able to deduce that the game helped develop the participants’ critical thinking, problem-solving, calculation and memory skills. Furthermore, he claimed that the game induced patience, determination, humility, sportsmanship and responsibility which may be considered as necessary attitudes amidst our current condition. Local historical culture and local history data may also be used for remote and home-based learning. Gilbas (2020) discussed the use of Hispanic poems as sources of Filipino culture and local historical data (directly or indirectly mentioned in the poems), in teaching regional culture (of Bicol) and history. She found that the poems were reflective of reliable materials in understanding Bicol soil and of the way of life of its inhabitants, and suggested using local materials to further preserve the cultural identity of the locality.

Shifting to the new normal, the next two articles used online tools and platforms for pedagogy. The study of Landicho (2020) emphasized the use of google maps as an instructional tool in Senior High School Earth Science class. Apparently, he found the tool engaging to the

Generation Z learners. However, means and ways to maneuver some challenges which include slow connections and limited tools are at hand. Schools going into online mode may look into the possibility of addressing such gaps for better delivery of lessons. Finally, the last article on quality through tools and pedagogy highlights the affective domain of teaching and learning. Frigillano (2020) used euphemistic texts to influence students' empathy, prejudice and corrupt communication usage. She found that using euphemistic texts diminished the participants' corrupt communication usage, maintained higher levels of empathy and lowered prejudice level. Seemingly, this may be a good input while we transition and focus on social media.

Our last two articles define our transition to the new normal. The Business Processing Outsourcing (BPO) Industry has long been one of the “future job markets”. Thus, in preparing for our students to successfully thrive in this industry, inputs to curriculum as extracted from empirical data on BPO may be necessary for curricular providers to ensure training for the industry needs. Bugay and Gutierrez (2020) identified the oral communication challenges that deviate from the standard American English. They found that the oral communication challenges of the trainees/agents are focused on pronunciation, syntax, and phrase/sentence construction. This means that assessment and evaluation of varied teaching methods and techniques must be done to address the challenges in English proficiency, which may be considered as input to English for Specific Purposes (ESP) programs for BPO agents. Our last article for this issue highlights the factors affecting teacher's use of web portal in knowledge sharing. Tabahen (2020) found that a significant relationship exists between technology acceptance and perceived behavioral controls of the teachers. This means that technology structure is considered a factor that controls the intention of a person to engage in knowledge sharing. As we move towards a technology-driven environment in the education domain brought about by the concept of the new normal, training may be necessitated to address the key factor to technology acceptance of the teachers.

Shifting into the “new normal” is not as easy as providing technology for everyone. Considerations such as sustaining quality while in transit is one. Local and cultural technology may need to be recalibrated for better context-based use of technology. Preparation for

transit may involve cognition, infrastructure, support, and acceptance for a meaningful and viable “new normal”.

The Editor

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