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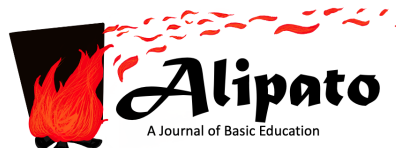
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EDITOR'S NOTE

The state of basic education in the Philippines has recently been characterized as a learning crisis, as reflected in assessment results and policy analyses. **Volume 16 of *Alipato: A Journal of Basic Education*** turns from this macro-level diagnosis to the micro realities of teachers and students that contribute to these patterns by bringing together six studies that highlight how teaching practices and learner experiences shape educational outcomes.

The first three studies focus on *transforming what and how we teach* by creating more inclusive, engaging, and responsive learning environments.

Alvin G. Mejorada reveals that Filipino Muslims remain underrepresented and subtly misportrayed in Social Studies textbooks. This finding underscores the need to reform existing learning materials to frame a more inclusive and accurate representation of the nation's diverse identities.

Building on transforming instructional materials, **Job Martin S. Villafuerte** and **Crizel P. Sicat-De Laza** show that text-driven instructional materials significantly improved students' motivation in language learning. Their study highlights that when materials are intentionally designed, they do not only deliver the content but also enhance student engagement.

Shifting focus to assessment practices, **Jomar D. Redubla** explores how teachers' experiences with Artificial Intelligence (AI)-driven assessment evolved from skepticism to cautious acceptance, with recognition to its value in enhancing feedback and informing instruction while still requiring human judgment. This emphasizes the idea that meaningful integration of AI in classroom practice involves teachers taking the role as critical interpreters of technology rather than as passive users.

The other three studies focus on *analyzing how learners understand and engage* with complex ideas. These works highlight how meaning-making varies across different domains, from abstract concepts to formal disciplines and learning environments.

Charmaine Dianne V. Masangkay and **Marie Yvette Concepcion-Alcazar** demonstrate that young Filipino learners actively construct their understanding of death and highlight that how learners understand and engage with complex concepts is inseparable from their social and cultural contexts. Their study illustrates how a framework for discussing difficult concepts to young learners is developed.

Similarly, **Daren Sauza-Ngadima** and **Teodora M. Salubayba** show that learners' engagement with online learning is shaped by contextual and socio-cultural factors. Building on these insights, their study proposes a model for evaluating online learning that is grounded in appreciative-critical ethnography.

Finally, **Edgar Raphael Lapuz** and **Mary Justine Clarise A. Trinidad** explore how learners perceive Home Economics and find that learners' understanding and engagement with the discipline are shaped by limited awareness and misconceptions. Their study reinforces that the way learners perceive a discipline impacts its perceived value and, consequently, its future development.

Together, these six studies underscore that addressing the nuanced, everyday realities of teaching and learning is critical in addressing the broader learning crisis. It is our hope that this issue of *Alipato* invites educators, researchers, and policymakers to engage more deeply with these grounded insights to pursue reforms that are both context-sensitive and learner-centered.

LADY ANGELA M. ROCENA

Editor-in-Chief

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