

## EDITORIAL

This special issue with the theme “Transformative educational practices in Asia Pacific region during and post COVID-19 pandemic” focuses on the ingenuity and reflections of teachers in the Asia Pacific region in responding to a challenging period when we had to pivot from in-person to online teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, and thereafter the transition to the endemic phase of COVID-19. Much has been theorised and discussed about new modes of teaching and learning which includes fully online asynchronous, fully online synchronous, and hybrid approaches. Despite the change in modes of delivery, fundamentals of good teaching and good practices remain. Among others are effective interaction with students, active learning, useful and prompt feedback to students on their learning and performance (Chickering & Gamson, 1987), inclusivity, and consideration for holistic development of students.

This special issue is rich in both diversity of topics as well as contributors from different countries in the Asian region, ranging from Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, The Philippines, Singapore, to Bangladesh, Kyrgyz Republic and Maldives. Teaching and learning contexts reported in this theme issue are equally wide ranging, from primary to secondary, higher education, and faculty members. Topics are also diverse in that they touch on approaches, psychological impact, use of technology, use of materials, use of social media, engagement with students, roles of academic development units, and psychological and behavioural impacts of pandemic on students.

The issue starts with three articles related to students’ well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic in Bangladesh and The Philippines. In the first article, Siddiky reported the psychological and behavioural conditions of 150 university students in Bangladesh during the COVID-19 outbreak and increased feelings of anxiety, depressions, tensions, fear/panic, restlessness, boredom and loneliness. The findings provided strong evidence of students’ mental health and well-being concerns during the COVID-19 pandemic. This implies that relevant counselling services should be made available in higher education institutions to support the students during this transition. The second article by Canlas and Karpudewan which reported a survey with 600 high school students in The Philippines, added insights on pandemic preventive behaviours which were most relevant to students. These included direct preventive behaviours, healthy habits and lifestyle, limited physical social contact, curiosity about COVID-19, and COVID-19 support.

In the third article, Kong investigated the use of social media among first year undergraduate students during COVID-19 pandemic to find out its relationship with depression. From 386 respondents who reported the daily time spent and the frequency of visits on social media, Kong found that high levels of investment in a variety of social media activities were associated with symptoms of depression, even though the total time spent on social media was not associated with depression. Kong suggested that educators in higher education institutions can leverage the use of social media to disseminate targeted educational messages on mental health, especially during the pandemic.

In general, findings from the first three articles provide recommendations and directions for pandemic and post-pandemic support to students. Insights from these studies could be useful for teachers and educators in the Asia Pacific region to refer to when planning strategies to support the well-being of students during crisis.

The second theme is educational technology during COVID-19, with three articles featured in this theme issue. Nasution conducted a content analysis using a descriptive approach to determine trends in research on educational technology carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia. The findings revealed that the main research subject was related to online learning; and the most widely used social media platforms are Google Classroom and WhatsApp. The findings from this study affirmed that the use of social media applications in education in Indonesia has progressed steadily during the crisis period.

Following this article, using an online survey approach, Namoco conducted a quantitative study to determine the factors that influenced the use of Web 2.0 tools in teaching among 300 educators in a Philippine public university located in Northern Mindanao. The findings revealed that performance expectancy and effort expectancy are significant determinants of behavioural intention of using Web 2.0 tools. The findings are relevant to enhance understanding on the usage of Web 2.0 tools in teaching among educators and ways to empower them to use technological tools in teaching.

While Namoco's article focuses on higher education educators, the next article by Adams et al. focuses on students' engagement in e-learning. Analyses were done based on gender, age, ethnicity, level of education and field of study in a Malaysian public higher education institution. Their findings showed that students have high levels of behavioural engagement as compared with cognitive and emotional engagement in e-learning. As postulated by Adams et al., one associated risk is that students might turn into passive learners, and they might feel disconnected from their lessons if educators failed to identify their competence and needs in e-learning.

Considering that online teaching and learning is a primary mode during the COVID-19 pandemic, the three articles related to use of educational technology shed light on online teaching and learning practices among Asia Pacific educators and learners during this period, in particular, situational and infrastructure challenges they faced.

Pedagogy is another theme of prominence with seven articles featured in this issue. Sabani and Istiqomah reported the roles and challenges faced by Indonesian elementary school teachers when implementing online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their findings clearly illustrated how teachers took up the roles and responsibilities to deliver online training without hesitation, how they improvised the pedagogical processes and curricular materials to make them more attainable and accessible by their students. The pedagogy during online teaching and learning is undoubtedly stronger when it is supported by a learning model. The next three articles by Annamalai et al., Nolasco, Azizan et al. and Poonpon provide examples of how university lecturers in Malaysia,

The Philippines, and Thailand applied evidence-based pedagogical online approaches to deliver lesson and facilitate learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The strengths and constraints of each model were investigated, reviewed and discussed.

Pursuing the pedagogy thread, Jothinathan et al. explored the concept of inclusiveness during emergency remote teaching and the researchers reminded educators that students at-risk of learning difficulties should not be left behind during online teaching and learning. In their research, they found that involvement of parents is especially critical for effective online teaching and that there needs to be a re-thinking of support for students, especially students who are at-risk of learning difficulties, during remote teaching and learning. This is followed by Sun and Buripakdi who reviewed curricular materials in China within the framework of Global Citizenship Education (GCE). They discussed how GCE could make teachers and students be more aware of the interconnected nature of the world, which is obviously evident during the pandemic and post-pandemic time.

Wrapping up this issue are two articles which examined educators' professional development during the COVID-19 pandemic. The article by Ragupathi and Lee examined the role of academic development units (ADUs) during crisis situations. Based on their semi-structured interviews of 17 faculty members of micro, meso and macro levels, they shared insights on the type of support required by the faculty community in a higher education institution during the COVID-19 pandemic. The article by Sakulprasertsri et al. provides further insights on how digital professional development could be improved by increasing the level of audience engagement throughout the digital professional development session to better simulate the face-to-face interaction found in on-site seminars.

With these 15 articles, it is our hope as editors of this special issue that the papers would spur further conversations among teachers and researchers in investigating and sharing their innovative approaches in ensuring learning continues amidst difficult times.

## **References**

Chickering, A. W., & Gamson, Z. F. (1987). Seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education. *AAHE Bulletin*, 3-7.

## **Editors:**

Low Hui Min, Universiti Sains Malaysia  
Thien Lei Mee, Universiti Sains Malaysia  
Lee Kooi Cheng, National University of Singapore