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From the Editor

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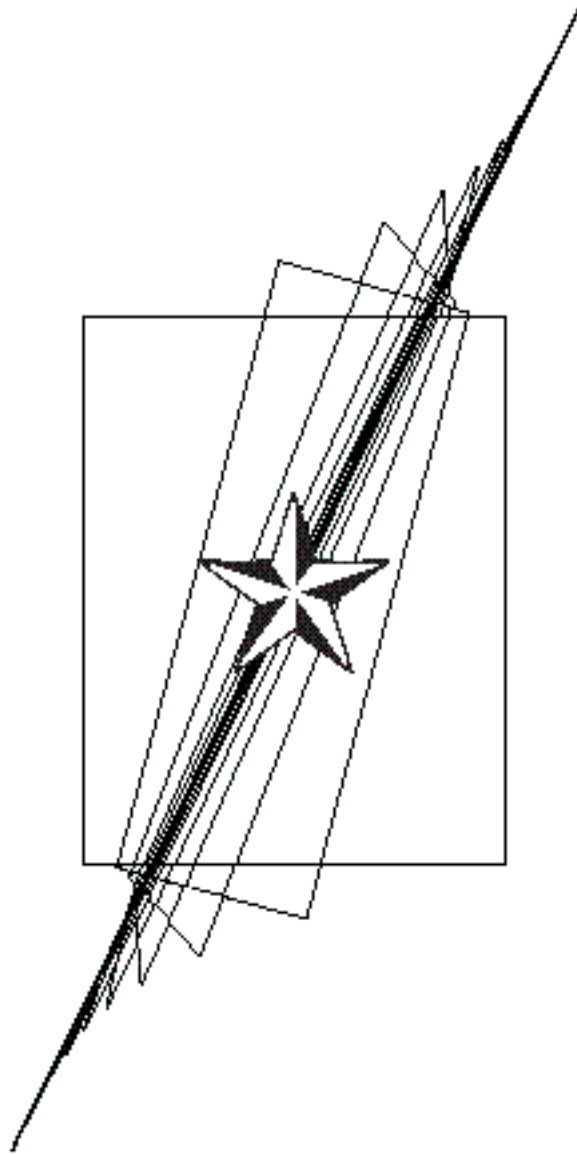
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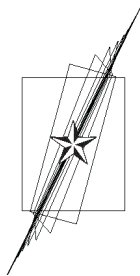
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Table of Contents

FROM THE EDITOR

<i>Romeo B. Lee</i>	vii
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RESEARCH ARTICLES

Health-Seeking Behavior of the Uninsured Before and After the Universal Coverage Scheme in Thailand <i>Natthani Meemon and Seung Chun Paek</i>	1
Formation of Identity and Sexual Orientation of Young Filipino Bisexuals: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis <i>Kristian Ed G. Geonanga</i>	15
Over-Education Among Doctorate Holders in the Korean Labor Market <i>Kihong Park, Dooseok Jang, and Hazrul I. Shahiri</i>	32
Understanding the Broader Horizon of Sexual Encounter: A Case Study on Sexual Engagement Among Filipino Teens <i>Dalmacito A. Cordero, Jr.</i>	46
Good Governance of Thai Local Educational Management <i>Nipa Booranakit, Pariyaporn Tungkunan, Dhorn Suntrayuth, and Jazlin Ebenezer</i>	62
Business Model Innovation: How Do Government Training Institutes in the Philippines Create, Deliver, and Capture Value? <i>Divina M. Edralin, Raymund B. Habaradas, Frances Jeanne Sarmiento, and Liza Fumar</i>	78
Community-Based Enterprise (CBE) Export Performance Strategy: An Analysis of Thailand's Entrepreneurial OTOP Program <i>Vipada Sitabutr and Samart Deebhijarn</i>	91

The Development of the Filipino Coping Strategies Scale <i>John Robert C. Rilveria</i>	111
Civil Society and Domestic Politics in International Relations: Lessons from Global Climate Governance <i>Jinhyun Lee and Brendan Howe</i>	127
RESEARCH BRIEFS	
Leisurely Travels and Global Sojourns: An Inquiry on the Human and Economic Aspects of Tourism <i>Joseph C. Velasco</i>	141
Assessing and Ranking ASEAN Academic Journals <i>Jose Isagani B. Janairo and Gerardo C. Janairo</i>	151
Thai Vocational College Education Monitoring and Evaluation: A Confirmatory Factor Analysis <i>Sugunya Suksatan, Pariyaporn Tungkunanan, and Siripan Choomnoom</i>	157
Justification of Intimate Partner Violence in the Philippines: Attitudes Towards Wife Beating Among Filipino Women <i>Wilfred Luis Clamor</i>	168
Enhancing Thai High School Student Critical Thinking Capability: A New Learning Management Model <i>Ken Changwong, Aukkapong Sukkamart, and Boonchan Sisan</i>	175
Teachers' Perspective on Sexual Health and Relationship Education in Northern Prefecture in Japan: A Qualitative Study <i>Hiroko Yamashina, Asuna Arai, Yoshihide Obayashi, Toshiki Mishima, and Hiko Tamashiro</i>	184
A Causal Relationship Model of Thai Students Disciplined Minds <i>Aukkapong Sukkamart</i>	193
BOOK REVIEW	
Filipino Medical Workers in Asia: Narratives, Discourses, and Contestations <i>Dennis V. Blanco</i>	204
GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS	211

From the Editor

We have long recognized the twin roles of universities—of producing evidence-based knowledge in the social sciences and utilizing that knowledge to help solve our multitude of social problems. Likewise, we have recognized that, although universities have generated a vast amount of social sciences knowledge over time, their efforts at translating the gained knowledge into practice, and in creating the desired social impact, are limited. Time and again, universities are challenged to even work harder to close the knowledge–practice gap; crucially, they are called, among others, to effectively communicate their social sciences knowledge to—and to prod into action—a critical mass of policymakers, program professionals, service providers, and the general public. Fortunately, we have networks in the Asia-Pacific that can help guide universities on how to influence the non-academic sectors. For example, the ASEAN University Network (<http://www.aunsec.org/>), the Association of Southeast Asian Institutions of Higher Learning (<http://www.seameo.org/asaihl/>), and the Association of Universities of Asia and the Pacific (<http://www.e-auap.org/>) can help define a roadmap and an action plan. Research-based journals, such as those listed in the ASEAN Citation Index (<https://goo.gl/j4nUew>), can help articulate, very lucidly, the practical and programmatic implications of social sciences knowledge.

For several years now, the Asia-Pacific Social Science Review (Scopus, ASEAN Citation Index, and Category A Journal), with De La Salle University as the publisher, continues to underscore the real-world implications and utilities of its featured knowledge. This mission has been made much more pronounced, when the Philippines' Commission on Higher Education, through a multi-year grant awarded beginning 2017, had called for the Review (as well as other local journals) to carry out more systematic efforts to increase the public and societal impact of social sciences knowledge. The mandate demands for social sciences knowledge to be promoted and marketed more strongly on the Internet and among the key stakeholders, and to employ popular languages and approaches that more of the general population could fathom. Across these activities and tasks, there is an inherent need to spell out how research findings can be effectively transformed into or made part of policies, programs, or specific actions. We have several sets of research findings in this edition that have immense practical and cross-country significance.

Universal health care (UHC), which is essentially about providing quality and affordable facility-based health care services to every citizen, is a goal that the region's national governments are seeking to achieve. Sadly, and in real terms, UHC has been failing to cover every citizen in various countries across the region, be it in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and even in ultra-rich Singapore. Who are the citizens who are left behind? Without doubt, these are the indigents, who, in the absence of having limited resources, would forego seeking any health care services or would be seeking health care services from the informal sector. The most common solution taken to resolve the indigents' lack of access to facility-based services has been to provide them with health insurance, which is the right thing to do. The question, however, is—Is this strategy really effective, and does it really lead to the actual use of facility-based health services? In their article entitled "Health-Seeking Behavior of the Uninsured Before and After the Universal Coverage Scheme in Thailand," *Natthani Meemon*

and *Seung Chun Paek* strongly think so. According to them, UHC significantly increased the utilization of facility-based care and simultaneously decreased the utilization of informal care. This association was found to be true, however, only among the lower-income and less educated persons as well as among females and those married. UHC programs must continue providing the indigents with health insurance, because it is key to shifting the health care access of this sector and to further expanding a national health care coverage. However, UHC programs must recognize that health insurance alone would not bring about the desired behavioral change in all citizens. As could be gleaned, there are sub-groups in the population, such as the males and singles, to whom health insurance coverage would not suffice as a driver. UHC programs must, thus, consider the non-financial dimensions of accessing health care services. Universities, through systematic studies and interventions, should be able to provide key answers in this respect.

Like public health, public education is likewise a continuing major concern of countries in the region that ought to be advanced to a universal level. In this day and age, no one should be left behind in terms of completing formal education. The mandated goal of educating the citizenry has become even more challenging at present, amidst the competition brought about by the processes of globalization and regional integration. We know that to remain relevant, we must innovate, otherwise, we would soon be digging our own graves (“Innovate, or die!”, as some would say). In many nooks and crannies of the region, therefore, we get to know and even experience first-hand the various educational innovations (e.g., concerning courses, curricula, and pedagogies) that national and sub-national governments have planned or instituted. It is apt to say then that whatever happens to public education truly depends on what governments do or fail to do. Governance, in the broadest sense of the word, is at the heart and soul of public education. But what constitutes good governance of educational systems? From their study, “Good Governance of Thai Local Educational Management,” *Nipa Booranakit, Pariyaporn Tungkunan, Dhorn Suntrayuth, and Jazlin Ebenezer* point to the four factors of good governance, namely, environment, input, process, and productivity. Of these, the input factor—in terms of personnel, money, material, and equipment—is the most important. Input is really about allocating and spending the needed budget (in the absence of which the management and future of local education will be at stake). Each year, universities in Asia-Pacific, who are in a perpetual wonder as to why their regional and global rankings are always going south, should recognize the pivotal role of their respective budget in their university operations and performance indicators (not surprisingly, the highly-ranked universities in the region and in the world are well-funded). Even a beautifully-crafted vision and mission would go to waste without the necessary funds. To promote good governance at the local, provincial, or national level, therefore, governments must be taken to task to earmark the needed funds. Universities should be able to help identify the strategies via systematic research on how to make governments commit to actualizing and sustaining their financial input. The age-old excuse that governments cannot allocate, let alone spend because they have no money, is not anymore acceptable. For missions as noble and life-changing as public education, money should not be a problem since we have so much of it in the public coffers.

Budget is only the beginning of good things to come in public education. Good governance should see to it that these good things are also planned, executed, and monitored well. At the heart of these management matters is the training and re-training of teachers. We know that social change, which impacts on students’ behaviors, is so constant that only teachers whose skills have been periodically upgraded would be able to deliver effective responses. In many public education systems across the countries in the region, much has yet to be done, perhaps not so much about the training and re-training of teachers on basic education but on special education involving matters such as sexual health and relationships. We know fully well the prevailing sexual norms among our youths nowadays and the strategic role of a rightful education in protecting the sexually-active ones from adverse consequences (these are life-changing, to say the least). In this educational endeavor, the role of teachers, including the role of their training and re-training, is central and key—and must be pursued. This is precisely the message of *Hiroko Yamashina, Asuna Arai, Yoshihide Obayashi, Toshiki Mishima, and Hiko Tamashiro* in their piece entitled “Teachers’ Perspective on Sexual Health and Relationship Education in Northern Prefecture

in Japan: A Qualitative Study.” The authors call for the training and re-training of teachers because they found in their research that teachers, rather than “singing and dancing to the same tune,” had held varying perceptions and practices related to their instruction of sexual health and relationship education. This is by no means unique to Japan. Elsewhere, many teachers educating the young about sexual and relationship matters are not really prepared to address the many relevant challenges, because, in large part, they have within themselves many unresolved issues that influence their overall handling of the subject. Through research, universities can help identify effective approaches that could be used to help teachers to transcend their lingering personal issues. I should note that there should be concordance between the personal and professional views of teachers regarding sexual health and relationship education.

We have more research findings in this edition with equally important implications for their countries of origin, and for other countries in the region. For example, the findings on over-education among doctorate holders in the Korean labor market (*Kihong Park, Dooseok Jang, and Hazrul I. Shahiri*) have tremendous implications for the education and labor sectors, as well as for young people who are seeking social mobility. The perspectives on global climate governance (*Jinhyun Lee and Brendan Howe*) have practical utility for the region as it continues to broaden sectoral responsibilities. The data on business model innovation (*Divina M. Edralin, Raymund B. Habaradas, Frances Jeanne Sarmiento, and Liza Fumar*) and that on community-based enterprise export performance strategy, which is essentially about the one-town, one-product platform (*Vipada Sitabutr and Samart Deebhijarn*), are certainly useful for variously-sized organizations in the economic sector. Even the topic of our book review in this edition, “Caring for Strangers” (*Dennis V. Blanco*), offers several implications for the Philippines and other labor migrant-sending countries; I must add, especially if one has an insider’s perspective, that the book is emotionally moving (sigh). Whether it is about over-education, business model, export products, and labor migration, universities have the mission—and the wherewithal—to collect more systematic data and to influence varying courses of action. With thousands of them across the Asia-Pacific, universities can do so much for the region.

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