

UE Research Journal

Vol. 27 (2025): pp. 263-271

Reaching New Heights through Research Beyond 78: the UE Research Forum on September 2024

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The Office of Research Coordination (ORC) conducted the UE Research Forum on September 26, 2024, for its traditional contribution to the celebration of the 78th foundation anniversary of the University of the East with the theme "Reaching New Heights through Research Beyond 78." There were 585 participants distributed as follows: officers and faculty members (53); forum presenters (10); guests (6) and students from the College of Business Administration (CBA) Manila (5); Basic Education Department (BED) Manila (26); College of Computer Science and Systems (CCSS)(82); College of Dentistry (85); and College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) Manila (316).

Opening

Dr. Alberto T. Paala, dean of the UE Graduate School, gave the welcome remarks on behalf of UE Manila Chancellor Louie Divinagracia. Dean Paala commended the audience for their presence, which he considered a "testament to our shared commitment to advancing knowledge and fostering a vibrant research community." He described the forum's theme for this year as "capturing our shared mission to surpass self-imposed boundaries, reminding us of research opportunities, and urging us to explore new horizons." Lastly, he encouraged everyone to "embrace new perspectives, foster meaningful discussions, and remain driven to elevate our research outputs so we can turn today's theme into reality."

UE President Zosimo Battad welcomed the participants to this year's forum, stressing the efforts of the faculty in adhering to the required functions of higher educational institutes (HEIs), which are to promote instruction, advance research, and expand community outreach. He reiterated how important research is in generating new knowledge and how the only way the faculty can earn the title of a professor is when they are able to contribute new knowledge in their discipline through research. This knowledge should be disseminated through publication, and in this department, the University of the East Research Bulletin (UERB), which is now renamed as the University of the East Research Journal (UERJ), has provided an avenue for the dissemination of research findings of UE faculty and constituents.

ORC Director Lydia Leonardo welcomed the audience to the 17th UE Research Forum, recalling that even during the time of the pandemic, the forum continued using the webinar platform. For three years, from 2020 to 2022, the forum was conducted online with guest presenters coming from Centro Escolar University (CEU), Adamson University, Far Eastern University (FEU), and Manuel L. Quezon University (MLQU). In September 2023, the first onsite forum was held in UE Manila, followed by another onsite forum in March 2024 in UE Caloocan. Dr. Leonardo expressed hope that this third onsite forum will continue in the forthcoming years with plans of documenting the proceedings of each meeting and publishing them so more people would be aware of this biannual event. The current forum featured presentations from UE Manila and UE Caloocan, CEU Manila, and CEU Makati. A new guest presenter, this time from Jose Rizal University (JRU), in the person of Dr. Michael Angelo Battung, was also welcomed in the forum.

Presentations in the Morning

The morning session featured presentations from various interesting fields. UE CAS Manila faculty Prof. Steve Obanan's talk entitled "Tree Biodiversity Assessment of a Highly Urbanized City in the Philippines" stressed the importance of urban parks such as the Quezon Memorial Circle Park (QMCP), which could contribute to urban park biodiversity, which is vital in the promotion of health and well-being of city inhabitants. Such

urban parks, if well-maintained, can also provide various ecosystem services that contribute ecological benefits to highly altered urban settlements. The QMC urban park was found to have high tree biodiversity with a Shannon diversity index value of $H' = 3.024$. Narra (*Pterocarpus indicus*) was the most abundant tree species, and Fabaceae was the most common tree family in the urban park. Most of the tree species are native trees, although introduced trees were equally abundant. Prof. Obanan encouraged people in the academe, particularly in the field of Biology, to do more research that could produce results that can be used as guides by local government authorities in crafting policies for the maintenance of urban parks.

The presentation of CEU faculty Prof. Joan Adriano entitled "Green synthesis of silver nanoparticles by *Ipomoea batatas*, *Colocasia esculenta*, and *Moringa oleifera* aqueous leaf extracts" showed the potential of using common and readily available plants such as gabi, talbos ng kamote and malunggay in the synthesis of silver nanoparticles. Silver nanoparticles play a crucial role in nanotechnology research and development with widespread applications across diverse fields owing to their distinct physicochemical and biological properties. Although these plants by themselves cannot produce silver, they have special molecules that can facilitate the production of silver nanoparticles when combined with agents such as silver nitrate. The plant-based green synthesis of silver nanoparticles presents a practical, environmentally friendly, and cost-effective method with significant potential for further applications.

Prof. Stephen Capilitan from CEU, in his talk entitled "Investigating the Impact of Clinical Applications and Systems Dynamic Modeling on Systems Thinking in Undergraduate Cell and Molecular Biology Education," stressed the impact of utilizing clinical applications to enhance systems thinking abilities and proficiency in creating stock-and-flow diagrams among undergraduate Biology students. Results from classroom observations, student products, and interviews indicate that most students who utilized these applications were able to identify and apply the seven characteristics of systems thinking. The findings highlight the importance of (1) introducing the seven

characteristics of systems thinking, (2) applying these characteristics in various contexts, (3) focusing on individual characteristics, and (4) explicitly using system language. This study shows the potential of integrating clinical applications and systems dynamic modeling in improving cell and molecular biology education. This might just be part of the solution to addressing the low proficiency in mathematics, science, and critical thinking. Teachers need to be oriented on this new concept in learning and embrace novel and new technologies since these are valuable ways of improving learning in this present time.

Dr. Michael Angelo P. Battung from JRU, in his first presentation entitled "The Multi-Stream Management Approach on Millennial Generation Workers and Its Impact on Job Satisfaction, Employee Productivity, and Organizational Commitment," spoke about multi-stream management, which is a better way of dealing with Gen Z employees by addressing their job productivity and performance, organizational commitment and job satisfaction to increase their longevity in the company and improve their performance. Unfortunately, this approach still has to be adopted by many companies, but it is believed that this is the best way to deal with Gen Z employees who wish to be treated like stakeholders instead of just mere employees in the sense that they are heard and listened to and their views carefully considered.

In his second presentation, entitled "Influence of Budgetary Control on the Growth of MSMEs in Southern Manila District of NCR," Dr. Battung talked about how important budgetary control is to MSMEs to be able to survive aside from assistance from the government. The study shows that most respondents in his study agree that good budgetary control can facilitate the growth and efficiency of good business operations. This study enhances the current understanding, particularly in the budgeting and growth development of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). The paucity of government assistance eventually led to the bankruptcy of many of these enterprises during the recent serious health emergency of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Michael Anthony Aduan from UE, in his presentation entitled "Code-Switching in Translanguaging Practices of College

Students Toward their Oral Proficiency in English,” explored the correlation between different code-switching practices and students’ performance on the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) Speaking Fluency Test. Findings revealed that intra-sentential code-switching was the most frequently employed type, significantly enhancing comprehension, communication, and classroom engagement. This research highlights the pedagogical benefits of integrating code-switching into classroom instruction, suggesting that strategic use of translanguaging can foster improved language learning outcomes.

There were interesting questions on the various ways of code-switching and how special adjustments should be made in order to make code-switching beneficial, such as among persons with language disabilities. He recommended that professors pay attention to how code-switching can actually be used in improving comprehension and learning. Mr. Aduan’s presentation is part of his master’s thesis, which he took at the CEU.

Presentations in the Afternoon

Dr. Kimson Gener Kong from UE, in his study entitled “Prevailing Moral Standards in Higher Educational Institutions,” presented the results of his investigation on the moral standards within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) among faculty and students, employing a phenomenological approach where he examined the lived experiences of six faculty and six students from diverse HEIs via in-depth interviews. The findings reveal structured standards aligned with the Code of Ethics for Professional Teachers, with emphasis on values such as respect, honesty, integrity, and social responsibility. In addition, unwritten moral standards reflect participants’ lived experiences, covering spirituality, empathy, accountability, fairness, and personal well-being. Three interconnected factors influence ethical behavior, namely moral character, interaction, and environment. Traits like integrity and self-discipline form the foundation for ethical conduct. Positive interactions, such as empathy and compassion, promote a supportive atmosphere. The moral environment, marked by responsibility and justice, shapes societal and institutional contexts for ethical behavior. Results of the study hopefully will improve understanding of the moral standards of HEIs and offer insights into promoting a morally upright society within institutions.

Prof. Mark Joseph Aragon from CEU-Makati, in his study entitled “Knowledge, Skills, and Training Needs of MAPEH Teachers in Private Secondary Schools in Iriga City,” reported that many MAPEH teachers lack proper training and support, especially in the case of private school teachers who have limited access to specialized training programs and often find themselves relying heavily on the internet as a source of information and instructional materials. It was emphasized that teachers cannot teach subjects that they have deficient knowledge about, and therefore, they cannot teach what they don't know. The results showed that MAPEH (Music, Arts, Physical Education, and Health) teachers need refresher training and various workshops to improve their skills in each of the four specializations. Recommendations include further studies in Graduate School on MAPEH, further work on Music education, balancing teacher time for different subject areas, and prioritizing training to improve knowledge and skills in MAPEH.

The study of Dr. Zandee Briones and Prof. Margarita Jaldo from UE entitled “A Sustainable Recovery Strategy for Tourism Related Establishments Affected by Pandemic through Continuous Improvement Plan” aimed to contribute to helping tourism-related establishments affected by the pandemic and create a sustainable recovery strategy through a continuous improvement plan. For almost three years, the tourism industry became one of the heaviest affected by closure and lockdowns. The challenge for tourism-related establishments is how to win back their customers and recover from financial loss. Through interviews and questionnaires of respondents such as managers, staff, and customers of selected tourism-related establishments in Boracay, the study concluded that recovery strategies provide directions or outline the future of tourism-related establishments. Among tourism-related establishments, the hotel has the best recovery strategy. The corporation type of business has the best recovery strategy program. Implementation of recovery strategies leads to better services to customers and high morale of the workforce. Lastly, small-owned tourism-related businesses are not strategy recovery-centered.

Dr. Nelson Agoyaoy of UE, in his presentation entitled Disaster Preparedness and Awareness of Selected Barangays in Caloocan City,” assessed the level of awareness about the

implementation of disaster preparedness programs and activities and sought solutions to problems encountered by the six (6) purposely selected barangays located in Caloocan City, a first-class highly urbanized city north of Metro Manila, Philippines. Respondents were officials of the barangay, Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) officials, and its residents. Results show that the respondents are fully aware of their preparation during times of disaster because their respective barangays conduct house-to-house information campaigns about what to do before, during, and after a disaster occurs. Their barangays provide medicines, hygiene, and sanitation kits for victims of disasters. They also have enough equipment, ambulances, emergency vehicles, and evacuation centers to support their disaster preparedness programs. Fire, flood, earthquake, and typhoon are the most experienced disasters in their barangays.

Problems encountered in the implementation of disaster preparedness programs were the lack of qualified personnel to conduct training, miscommunication between officials and residents due to political and personal reasons, and lack of sufficient budget that resulted in the low interest of residents to join in activities and programs. To improve disaster preparedness, the respondents suggested that there should be a continuous information campaign, training, and partnership with stakeholders towards community empowerment, strengthening communication among residents and officials, and proper allocation of funds for infrastructure development through periodic maintenance and inspections.

Open Forum

An open forum followed after every three presentations. The need for more urban parks was emphasized by Prof. Obanan, but given the limited green spaces in the city, residential yards, and pocket gardens could be set up. The problem of invasive species can be addressed by controlling them. Old trees should be preserved. Urban parks should be managed and maintained by LGUs, and they could be guided as more studies are made on urban parks.

Prof. Adriano stressed that while plants are unable to produce silver nanoparticles, they possess bioactive compounds that can facilitate the production of these by exposing them to

longer periods and higher concentrations of agents such as silver nitrate. The study shows the potential of locally available plants such as talbos ng kamote, gabi, and malunggay.

Prof. Capilitan suggested that the proper intervention to improve student's learning be chosen carefully. In the face of predictions of future pandemics, educational institutions should be acquainted with varying strategies for learning and teaching, and systems thinking is one of them. Prof. Capilitan explained that while it may be stressful to introduce new concepts in learning, the rewards could be in the possible improvement of the low proficiency in mathematics, science, and critical thinking. The demand for embracing novel and new technologies to alleviate problems in learning cannot be overemphasized.

Mr. Aduan explained that language is not a measurement of knowledge but an avenue to express ideas and thoughts. Teachers should be convinced that code-switching is beneficial. Although there are some subjects, such as mathematics, that are hard to teach in the native tongue, teachers can use English terms but cannot explain them in Filipino. It was mentioned that some students, such as Montessori students, can express themselves better in English while others do so in Filipino. Translanguaging considers both languages as one.

Mr. Aduan emphasized everyone's need to be understood. New and alternative tools and strategies should be provided for people with disabilities like dyslexia. Students should be allowed to be comfortable in their native language and should be provided with alternatives that would allow them to communicate more effectively.

Dr. Battung explained that in the Philippines, compared to other countries, most decisions are made by top management. Many companies are not familiar with multi-stream management, and there is a need for focus group discussions to clarify this.

Dr. Battung suggested that there should be assistance from the national government during times of emergencies. NEDA should assist in recommending strategies to help reduce taxes and create more jobs. Communication should be improved further between business entrepreneurs and the national government.

Dr. Kong explained that moral interaction involves relationships with other people, and moral character can best be shown through interaction with people. A favorable moral environment marked by justice and responsibility is crucial in the expression of good ethical behavior. Dr. Kong explained the phenomenological approach that he used in his study, where he first collected significant statements and then grouped these statements into clusters, and then obtained the moral standards based on the clustering.

Prof. Aragon shared the challenge that teachers face in teaching MAPEH since their proficiency in teaching these subjects is not that acceptable. These teachers are not experts in these subjects and therefore lack the confidence and the competence to handle them. The need for training and even enrollment in Graduate School was emphasized as the only way to deal with this challenge.

Dr. Briones identified strategies that tourism-related establishments can adopt in order to be able to recover from the backlash that they experienced from the years of lockdown imposed during the pandemic. These include integration, intensification, diversification, and defensive strategies. They should be able to develop new products and ensure enhancement of designed reengineering. The study showed that hotels have the best recovery strategy.

Dr. Agoyaoy shared that disaster preparedness can further be enhanced through education and training. While the level of awareness has been elevated, the response can be further improved through education. Challenges include the sustainability of financial support and maintenance of the psychological and emotional well-being of the people during disasters.

Closing

The presenters were given certificates of appreciation towards the end of the program. Chancellor Victor Macam of UE Caloocan concluded the event with his closing remarks, where he thanked the participants for their active participation in the forum, indicating their interest in research. Chancellor Macam emphasized the importance of continuous improvement in the conduct of research and, most especially, the continuous dissemination of research findings.

