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Introduction to the Asian Qualitative Research Association Special Issue

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Abstract

Founded in 2015, the Asian Qualitative Research Association (AQRA) has become a leader in fostering qualitative research practice and education in the Philippines and beyond. Starting in 2016, AQRA has sponsored an annual conference featuring original qualitative research and scholarship. Past conference presenters were invited to submit their papers to *The Qualitative Report* (TQR) for peer review. As a result of this rigorous process, TQR is delighted to present this special issue in conjunction with AQRA.

Keywords

Asian Qualitative Research Association, Qualitative Research, Philippines

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Introduction to the Asian Qualitative Research Association Special Issue

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Founded in 2015, the Asian Qualitative Research Association (AQRA) has become a leader in fostering qualitative research practice and education in the Philippines and beyond. Starting in 2016, AQRA has sponsored an annual conference featuring original qualitative research and scholarship. Past conference presenters were invited to submit their papers to The Qualitative Report (TQR) for peer review. As a result of this rigorous process, TQR is delighted to present this special issue in conjunction with AQRA. Keywords: Asian Qualitative Research Association, Qualitative Research, Philippines

My name is Safary Wa-Mbaleka. I am the founding and current president of AQRA, the Asian Qualitative Research Association, located in the Philippines. AQRA started in 2015 as the result of the need for a platform for qualitative research (QLR) scholars and enthusiasts. From the day it was open to the public on November 17, 2015, AQRA has been rising significantly in the number of its member. In just the first 2 years of operation, the registered members crossed 1,000. As of the end of 2017, it was the only known international QLR organization in Asia. AQRA is part of the Adventist International Institution of Advanced Studies, a graduate school located in the Philippines.

AQRA's vision is to be the leading QLR association in Asia and beyond. Its mission is to promote QLR and develop QLR scholars. AQRA is doing this by providing capability building trainings through its own monthly programs at its headquarters, and through collaboration with other research organizations and both private and public colleges and universities around the Philippines. AQRA also provides some small research grants to help qualifying qualitative researchers with their research studies. AQRA has also awarded a few small grants in recognition for its members' social responsibility projects.

AQRA held its first international conference on QLR on April 20-21, 2016 in Tagaytay City, Philippines. It included one keynote session, four plenary sessions, and 83 concurrent session presentations, with 152 delegates from 22 countries. On April 25-27, 2017 in the same city, during our second international conference on QLR, the number increased. The conference had 250 delegates from more than 25 countries, with one keynote session, four plenaries, and 150 concurrent session presentations. The third international conference on QLR will be on April 24-26, 2018 in Subic Bay Travelers Hotel and Convention Center, Subic Bay, Philippines. The number is expected to continue to rise, as more and more people discover the power of QLR. More information about AQRA can be found at www.myAQRA.org.

One of AQRA's best practices is to facilitate mentorship between experienced qualitative researchers and novice. For instance, mentorship is provided to all the presenters to guide them in areas where they need improvement. This practice has been quite useful in helping new qualitative researchers grow scholarly. It has also helped a number of new qualitative researchers disseminate their QLR outputs. The manuscripts published in this special issue came from the first international conference and benefited from the mentorship of some AQRA QLR expert members.

Although AQRA is still taking its baby steps, it is making some important progress. Support from QLR expert organizations such as *The Qualitative Report*, is highly appreciated. It will certainly empower us in continuing to grow and providing higher quality capability building opportunities to QLR learners and enthusiasts in Asia and beyond. We plan to offer soon a certification program for additional mentors so that more training programs can be delivered effectively and efficiently.

Special AQRA and TQR Issue

I reached out to Ron Chenail, Editor-in-Chief of *The Qualitative Report*, and proposed publication of papers presented at previous AQRA conferences. He agreed so I invited authors to submit their papers for peer review. We reviewed the submitted papers and the authors revised their original conference papers based upon this feedback. This process culminated in the following six papers of this special issue of *The Qualitative Report*:

Experiences of LNU Neophyte Teachers: Cues for a Viable Mentoring Program Evelyn B. Aguirre and Solomon D. Faller Jr.

Leyte Normal University is located in Tacloban City, a city that became famous a few years ago because of the Typhoon Yolanda, one of the deadliest human catastrophes in modern history, that draw international attention due. Dr. Evelyn B. Aguirre is current the vice president for academic administration of that university. Dr. Somon D. Faller Jr. was working with Dr. Aguirre a few years ago when Dr. Aguirre was still the vice president for research. Within 2 years in her new position, Dr. Aguirre discovered that there was some level of disconnect between the faculty preparation and what actually happens in the classroom at their university. As the two researchers analyzed the reality, they quickly discovered that there was a need for mentoring. Such a program would be quite important, especially in a university that caters to the needs of students who went through such a terrible traumatic experience of losing their loved ones a few years back. As a result of this study, the authors propose some major aspects of teacher mentoring program that should be incorporated in designing such a program.

Aspirations of the Out-of-School Youth: Barangay Napara-an, Salcedo, Eastern Samar Perspective Apolonio I. Machica, Jr. and Agnesia A. Machica

This article was presented at AQRA's first international conference on qualitative research. It started as a result of one of AQRA's training programs on how to conduct qualitative research. Apolonio I. Machica, Jr. and Agnesia A. Machica (2017) are two educators working in one of the places that were badly damaged by one of the deadliest typhoons in recent history in the Philippines. One of the best, if not the best, ways for young people to prepare for their future in that place is accessing quality education. Unfortunately, there are many young people there who, for some reasons, are out of school. This prompted the authors to specifically address the role that aspirations play in the dreams of unschooled young people. The problem of unemployed and unschooled young people is common to many developing countries. This article brings a fresh perspective to this phenomenon from the Philippine context.

Including Rigor and Artistry in Case Study as a Strategic Qualitative Methodology **Prema Gaikwad**

Dr. Prema Gaikwad has been an educator in higher education for decades. She has some special passion for qualitative research. In fact, she has been teaching qualitative research for a number of years and has published a number of qualitative research papers. Her passion led her to sharing more in-depth look at case study as a research design. In her theoretical paper, she beautifully explains how to practically balance rigor and artistry in conducting a case study. In this paper, she discusses many important concepts and practices found in case study, in addition to discussing the misconceptions people have about it. This paper was presented at AQRA's first international conference on qualitative research in 2016. Dr. Gaikwad is one of AQRA's experienced trainers for qualitative research.

Lived Experiences of Battered Women in Ozamiz City, Philippines **Cinthya Superable**

Cinthya Superable's (2017) manuscript was presented at AQRA's first international conference on qualitative research in 2016. Her study on battered women reflects the unspoken reality of many Filipina women whose voices are not frequently heard in scholarly writings. Her findings show the endurance that such women go through and the greater reason why they prefer to live with an abusive husband instead of divorce. As seen in the study's findings, battered women value their children and family image so much that they are willing to continually live with an abusive husband than divorce him. One has to interpret reality from their perspective for it to make sense because the general perspective of most people may not make sense for such a decision. The author included a beautiful poem dedicated to battered women to express the pain of their lived experiences. This study should continue the ongoing discussion on the promotion of a more equitable and socially just world that empowers women.

Impact of English Language Training on Linguistic and Cultural Identity of Call Center Employees **Mitima Jean-Paul Zagabe**

This manuscript was presented at the AQRA's first international conference on qualitative research in 2016. As outcome of his master's thesis, Mitima Jean-Paul Zagabe decided to share the findings with other qualitative research enthusiasts. In his article, he addresses a very important topic in the Philippine setting; that is, the call center services. The Philippines has been the leading country on providing call center services for a few consecutive years now. Many employees are expected not only to learn English much better than the average; but also, to learn the culture of the country they represent, in most cases, the United States. The findings of this study provide an important contribution needed by the families of those working in call centers, their supervisors and trainers, the government policymakers, and even educators.

Addressing the Ten Commonly Asked Questions about Qualitative Research in the Philippines **Safary Wa-Mbaleka**

As part of the training programs I have delivered around the Philippines, I have witnessed many people being transformed not only into enthusiasts of qualitative research (QLR) but also into research enthusiasts in general. In the early months of the delivery of these

trainings at a large scale (which started later in 2015), I saw the need of assessing the knowledge of people who were attending the trainings. At the beginning of each training, I would simply request the participants to ask two questions that they wished answered by the end of the training. From their questions, I could tell the gaps they had in their understanding of QLR. In this article (Wa-Mbaleka, 2017), I raise the 10 most commonly asked questions about QLR in the Philippines and address them mainly using existing literature and sometimes my own understanding of the issues. This article is meant to help novice qualitative researchers, primarily in the Philippines, to grasp some basic notions about QLR.

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