

NOW YOU HEAR ME: CONTEXTUALISED POETRY IN ENHANCING LITERACY AND CHARACTER BUILDING

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Abstract: Contextualised poetry is a powerful tool which catapults English literacy and instills moral values and principles to learners. This is a qualitative study conducted in a senior high school of a district in Quirino province. This study uncovered the character-building themes and moral reflections of eleventh graders' close analysis of *Now You Hear Me*: a contextualised poem used as an English learning resource in teaching literary analysis in the subject 21st Century Literature from the Philippines and the world. Optimising thematic analysis in uncovering the prevalent themes from the 54 learners' outputs, results unravelled five emergent character-building themes which are responsibility, moral awakening, accountability, empathy, and self-discipline. These themes resonate a profound and ethical engagement of learners into ecological constraints, which are also viewed as moral imperatives. Through this learning experience, students begin to live with moral virtues, a pivotal element in building a holistic learner that is socially aware, morally upright and environmentally responsible individual. Thus, this study recommends English language teachers to develop contextualised learning resources such as environmental poetry to enhance writing literacy and promote character building.

Keywords: *character building, contextualisation, english language education, learning resource development, poetry*

INTRODUCTION

Change is admitted as a fact to be constant and universal. The changes we encounter call for innovations, research, and reformation of policies—these are tools that help us adapt to the new shifts in our education system (Benito et al., 2021; Hodges et al., 2021; Kamsker & Slepcevic-Zach, 2021; Pešikan & Ivic, 2021; Sheppard et al., 2021). Today, English is considered as the de facto language that bridges cultures from global villages. For an individual to be globally competent, one needs to be confident and proficient in the use of English both in oral and written discourse. Understanding this reality demands a change and quality English education that promotes literacy partnered with character building.

According to a report from the Philippine Statistics Authority (2025), the Functional Literacy, Education and Mass Media Survey (FLEMMS) results revealed that about an estimated 18 million Filipino high school graduates are functionally illiterate, they are not able to read, write, compute, and comprehend. This finding raised an alarming concern about

the quality of instruction delivered in the senior high school education of the Philippines. Thus, it necessitates changes and innovations to address this learning gap in English language education.

According to Mazzeo et al. (2003), contextualised instructional strategies are designed to more seamlessly link the learning of foundational skills, and academic or occupational content by focusing teaching and learning squarely on concrete applications in a specific context that is of interest to the student. Contextualised materials enable the learners to have a sense of belongingness in the content of the lesson. It gives them a clearer perspective to the environment they belong to, making the learners understand the learning competencies easier. Thus, contextualisation is an approach that promotes learning in English language learning.

One of the subjects in the senior high school curriculum is the teaching of 21st-century literature from the Philippines and the world. Part of the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) in this subject for Quarter 1, Module 1 are: write a close analysis and critical interpretation of literary texts and show a sense of adaptability of the Philippine literary history. With these learning objectives, the students are expected to demonstrate understanding and appreciation of a literary work through a written close analysis: a reflection of learning or character building based on the literary piece in terms of form and theme, with a description of its context derived from research. Hence, the teacher-researchers utilised the poem *Now You Hear Me* as the literary text for these Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs).

‘Now You Hear Me’ is an ICT-based learning resource evaluated and accredited by the Learning Resource Management and Development System (LRMDS) of the SDO Quirino. It underwent content validity evaluation from division supervisors and evaluators in learning resource development. The learning resource can be accessed using the learners’ mobile phone through messenger. *Now You Hear Me* is a free verse allegory poem that presents elements which represent ideas and concepts beyond its literal meaning. Learners are expected to infer literary meaning from literal language based on usage (EN12Lit-Id-26) and analyse the figures of speech and other literary techniques and devices in the text (EN12Lit-Ie-27). The text contains allegorical lines that form imagery on global environment problems that we face today. It presents a cause-and-effect relationship of the abusiveness of humans to our environment. The contextualised symbolisms found in the poem are Bugkalots, Ludong, Sierra Madre, Cagayan River, and Quirino. The material presents hand-painted visuals that explain the content of each paragraph. It can be accessed using mobile phones, and the learners’ outputs were collected using Google Drive.

This study aimed to evaluate the written outputs of the students by unravelling the themes that reflect literacy and character building derived from their submitted close analysis.

1. What are the character-building themes that emerged from the learners’ close analysis of *Now You Hear Me*?
2. What are the learners’ moral reflections about the poem *Now You Hear Me*?

This study catapults the emerging role of contextualised poetry in teaching English language education that promotes literacy and character building. By thematising the learners’ literary analyses, the study unravels on how literary poetry improves metacognitive skills, and catalyst for moral and emotional development of learners. For teachers, it opens significant

insights on how literary works can be integrated in values education that enhances learners' empathy, resilience, environmental awareness, and intergenerational responsibility. Moreover, for curriculum designers, learning resource developers, and policymakers, this study may be used as a basis in designing and developing materials in English language education that is anchored from contextualisation and character building.

The context of this study is limited only to a senior high school of Cabarroguis District, and the participants are learners who had access to the learning resource *Now You Hear Me*. The subjective nature of the students' written output may not generally reflect the character traits of all the learners from the emotional, classroom, and cultural context in which the *Now You Hear Me* was integrated as learning resource in English. The study reflects immediate reflection of the participants, and it does not track whether it character-building themes will result into a long-term behaviour or learned principle of the students. Moreover, this study is only limited and focused to the understanding of learners' close analysis and it does not make comparisons to other studies related to character building.

In the conduct of this study, it is assumed that the students' close analysis of the ICT-based poetry *Now You Hear Me*, play a significant role in appreciating contextualisation as an approach in enhancing literacy and building character to senior high school students. The themes unravelled provided a paramount insight on the learned values and principles contributory to the holistic development of Filipino learners. Thus, this study catapulted the collaborative efforts in the design and development of *Now You Hear Me* as a learning resource, pressing toward the future of technology-enhanced language education for literacy and character building through contextualisation and literature.

This study is anchored from the Transformative Learning Theory of Mezirow (1991), for it recognises that the poem *Now You Hear Me* provokes reflective thinking. Thus, the learning resource enabled the learners to rethink and re-evaluate their assumptions and views on environmental awareness, changed their perspectives, and they committed to protect the environment.

Contextualisation of Learning Resources

Based on Department of Education Order No. 10, series of 2024, also known as the policy guidelines on the implementation of the MATATAG curriculum in the Philippine education system, the curriculum recognises the context and diversity of learners. Moreover, as it is learner-centred, it also highlights inclusivity, being developmentally appropriate, gender- and culture-sensitive. Furthermore, the design of the curriculum should be adaptable to the local and global context, allowing educational institutions to indigenise, localise, and enhance approaches unique to their social and educational context. Most importantly, the standards-based framework of the MATATAG curriculum resonates with contextualisation, which is anchored from learners' socio-cultural backgrounds and historical and environmental realities. Thus, the curriculum promotes character building and knowledge systems partnered with inclusivity and relevance for global development. It focuses on fostering a strong sense of righteousness, positive attitude, community building, and peaceful coexistence. The policy also encourages the development and quality assurance of learning resources to cater to the needs of learners.

According to Çakmak and Andujar (2025), contextualisation is an approach that provides a relevant and meaningful link between new concepts and learners' prior knowledge and experiences, which enhances retention. They asserted that in English language learning, contextualisation helps the learners improve their vocabulary and comprehension skills. Smelda et al. (2014) highlighted that digitalisation of learning resources such as literary works is an approach used in contextualisation. Johnson (2002) asserts that Contextualised Teaching and Learning (CTL) is unravelled when students value their learning to be relevant to the context of their realities.

In the context of this study, the contextualised poetry *Now You Hear Me* is a learning resource developed to enhance learners' critical analysis, which reflects their values and moral reflections learned. Thus, it recommends that teachers attend learning development programmes to be equipped with skills in crafting literary works that are competency-based to develop the needed learning resources.

Poetry as a Tool in Character Building

In the teaching of English language education, poetry plays a fundamental role in opening opportunities for learners to explore emotions, language, culture and moral values (Dalal & Farrukh, 2024). Poetry is an auxiliary tool in provoking critical thinking among learners. According to Kuriakose and Jena (2024), patience, honesty and empathy are improved when learners make use of reflective writing in processing their understanding of poetry. Poetry enables learners to express their personal experiences and hidden emotions, which helps learners enhance their self-confidence and emotional literacy, which are pivotal in their growth and development. Azizi et al. (2022) claim that moral self-development can be acquired through poetic inquiry. Reading and writing poetry cultivate character-building and activate moral imagination. Reflections from poetry are based on visceral affective dimensions which develop learners' humility and compassion. Furthermore, Rosalind (2024) underscored that poetry helps learners improve their moral reasoning and understanding of justice, courage and integrity.

Based on the above-mentioned research, it has been evident that poetry serves as a tool in developing literacy through critical thinking and character building for learners. In the context of this study, *Now You Hear Me* is a learning resource used in teaching Grade 11 learners the competency of writing close analysis, thus uncovering the prevalent themes developed from their outputs unravels the moral values learned. This highlights the need to maximise contextualisation as a trending approach in teaching literature to our ESL learners.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Colorafi & Evans, 2016) which primarily focused on understanding the participants' understanding or inference of the topic under investigation. In the context of this study, it aimed at uncovering the character-building extracts and moral reflections to generate themes from the learners' literary close analysis of the poetry *Now You Hear Me*.

The selection of the participants is based on the criterion identified by the researchers (Weyant, 2022). In this study, the participants are Grade 11 learners enrolled in the subject 21st Century Literature from the Philippines and the world. The subject is considered one of

the core subjects required in the K12 curriculum of the Philippines. The participants were willing and allowed by their parents to submit a critical interpretation or analysis of the poem *Now You Hear Me*. The learners are from the Cabarroguis District of Schools Division Office of Quirino for school year 2024-2025. The research context was selected because of its accessibility and convenience to the researchers. The submitted poem interpretations were composed of at least 300 words that is plagiarised free, and had no AI-generated content detected. There were 54 literary analysis outputs collected through Google Drive, an online platform that allows multiple users to access the submission of outputs. Moreover, the submitted outputs were secured with passwords for privacy, ensuring that no other learner has access to the submitted requirement aside from the researchers.

In unravelling the character-building related themes and moral reflections of the learners in their close analysis of the poem *Now You Hear Me*, thematic analysis (Clark & Braun, 2006) was employed. According to Nowell et al. (2017), thematic analysis is the foundation of qualitative research for it enhances one's ability in analysing qualitative data. Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) in the context of this present study is an approach that includes identifying significant extracts from the submitted learners' outputs and analysing the relevance of the learners' interpretations of the poem *Now You Hear Me*. Moreover, it is followed by organising significant extracts with similar concepts, describing them into clusters highlighting the moral reflections. Finally, it ends with the reporting of themes from a gathered data set.

The researchers ensured to employ ethical considerations in the whole duration of the conduct of the study. The participants' identity is hidden unanimously by codes, ensuring no discrimination against participants' physical, religious, moral, social values, and cultural identity. The coded themes from the learners' close analysis will be shredded after 5 years of no complaint has been made after the publication of this paper. The study commenced after an approved letter to conduct the study was signed by the school principal of the research context. Moreover, a letter of parental consent was secured for learners who are under 18 years old. Furthermore, learners were given the opportunity to accept or decline the opportunity for their close analysis to be used as research data in this present study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the findings and discussion of character-building themes and moral reflections of the students' close analysis of the poem *Now You Hear Me*. In the presentation of results, each character-building theme is preceded by the moral reflections of the students' extracts.

Responsibility

This theme highlights that environmental protection is considered as a responsibility entrusted by God to every human being. The extracts highlight that it acknowledges failure to fulfil God's command. "God gave us a taintless nature; we don't do our obligations as humans." (S1). "Humans allowed the darkness to swallow the beauty of our nature; we are parasites." (S13). Moreover, it emphasises the need for proactive virtues to solve environmental problems. "We should make a move so that nature will not be destroyed." (S2) "The poem *Now You Hear Me* is a reminder on how to be responsible for our actions." (S10) From these extracts, it can be underscored that the learners' realisation of their roles

to be members of the society who contribute significantly to the restoration of our environment resonates the affective impact of utilising the poetry *Now You Hear Me*. This theme can be associated with Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1991), which highlights that critical reflection of learners leads to a change of perspective and learning of new principles which enable them to take action in becoming responsible members of the society. Moreover, according to Rozeboom (2024), empathy is a characteristic which seeks to understand the situation and needs of other individuals, underscoring the moral responsibility of a person to be a source of help in the problems that challenge societal development.

Character Building Theme	Extracts	Moral Reflections
Responsibility	<i>“God gave us a taintless nature; we don't do our obligations as humans.” (S1)</i>	<i>“God gave us a taintless nature; we don't do our obligations as humans.” (S1)</i>
	<i>“We should make a move so that nature will not be destroyed.” (S2)</i>	<i>“We should make a move so that nature will not be destroyed.” (S2)</i>
	<i>“The poem Now You Hear Me is a reminder on how to be responsible for our actions.” (S10)</i>	<i>“The poem Now You Hear Me is a reminder on how to be responsible for our actions.” (S10)</i>
	<i>“Humans allowed the darkness to swallow the beauty of our nature, we are parasites.” (S13)</i>	<i>“Humans allowed the darkness to swallow the beauty of our nature, we are parasites.” (S13)</i>

Moral Awakening

The theme reflects a moral call for a change of behaviour, a motivation for every individual to awaken the collaborative efforts in protecting our environment. The poem *Now You Hear Me* serves as an ethical spotlight on the environmental challenges we are facing. These presented extracts catapult the moral awakening of care and protection as payment for the received resources from the environment. “It’s not too late. We can still save our nature.” (S14) “We hear what God wants us to do, therefore we must act now.” (S6) “We should take care and preserve nature because it is endowed by God.” (S5) The theme of Moral Awakening reflects Kohlberg’s Theory of Moral Development (1981). It emphasises that the moral reasoning of care and protection of the environment serves as payment for the resources from our nature.

Character Building Theme	Extracts	Moral Reflections
Moral Awakening	<i>“We should take care and preserve nature because it is endowed by God.” (S5)</i>	Realisation of the need to protect and conserve natural resources
	<i>“It’s not too late. We can still save our nature.” (S14)</i>	Taking action is not yet too late.
	<i>“Our nature needs our help to bring back its magnificent beauty.” (S8)</i>	Restoration is a duty owed to a benefactor.
	<i>“We hear what God wants us to do, therefore we must act now.” (S6)</i>	God’s voice is the ultimate authority we need to follow.

Accountability

As one of the themes revealed, accountability demands every individual to be decisive in making life choices. In the context of this research, it underscores the need for understanding the probable outcome of decisions made on our daily way of living, in the utilisation of our natural resources, consumption of goods, and disposal of our waste. *“Environment is no one’s property to destroy.” (S1)* The extract from S1 asserts that the natural resources that we have do not belong to anyone, moreover it also necessitates that it can be considered as shared ownership to everyone living in it. Thus, this reality capitulates that environmental destruction is a collective crime against the natural environment, to the haven that serves as only home. *“Our abusing personality will ruin nature; if nature gets revenge it will worsen.” (S7)* *“Be aware of the effects of their actions on nature... we should not harm it.” (S12)* The Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986) explains self-regulation and reciprocal determinism which demands every individual to be accounted for the decisions made. In the context of this study, learners realised the importance of making the right decisions in the consumption of our natural resources, and the protection of our environment.

Character Building Theme	Extracts	Moral Reflections
Accountability	<i>“Environment is no one’s property to destroy.” (S1)</i>	Environmental destruction violates the collective rights of every life.
	<i>“Our abusive personality will ruin nature; if nature gets revenge it will worsen.” (S7)</i>	Every action has its symmetrical reaction.
	<i>“Be aware of the effects of their actions on nature... we should not harm it.” (S12)</i>	We need to live in harmony with nature.
	<i>“There is always a consequence into our wrong actions.” (S5)</i>	There is always a punishment into our wrong actions.

Empathy

Empathy is a character which understands the needs and situations of others, making it necessary for an individual to take action in helping resolve the problems identified. In the context of this study, the extracts *“The poem Now You Hear Me is all about the suffering of our nature” (S3)* and *“My emotion was smashed; the poem touched my heart. I felt what mother earth is feeling.” (S7)* frame for ecological care as emotional and ethical duty of every human being. This theme urges every learner to be mindful of our environmental issues, *“We need to listen to what our nature wants to voice out.” (S4)* This extract resonates that recognising the realities we experience on environmental abnormalities is the first step towards an initiative to be responsive to the call for help from our planet Earth. According to Hoffman’s Empathy Development Theory (2000), empathy has a developmental process which results in moral action. In this present study, the utilisation of Now You Hear Me served as an opportunity for learners to understand empathy as a moral value needed by humanity.

Character Building Theme	Extracts	Moral Reflections
Empathy	<i>“The poem Now You Hear Me is all about the suffering of our nature.” (S3)</i>	Harming nature is wrong; feeling its suffering is morally necessary.

Character Building Theme	Extracts	Moral Reflections
	<i>"My emotion was smashed; the poem touched my heart. I felt what mother earth is feeling." (S7)</i>	Recognising nature's agony is the first step towards right changes of ecological footprints.
	<i>"We need to listen to what our nature wants to voice out." (S4)</i>	Listening is a moral duty everyone needs to learn.

Self-discipline

This character-building theme reflects the realisation of the students on the importance of self-discipline. Extract *"As a student I learned the importance of planting more trees." (S10)* aligns with Aristotle's Habituation, praxis over rhetoric, which highlights that virtue is learned through habit. The extract from participant S10 asserts that planting a tree creates a deeper sense of environmental responsibility. *"We need to throw garbage in the right bin; plant with friends and relatives." (S8)* This extract underscores that proper waste disposal must be a collective practice. Moreover, MacIntyre (1984) emphasised that virtue is learned and sustained through practices, a collective effort shared by responsible individuals. Moreover, *"Through this poem I also learned the importance of adopting environmental practices such as conserving water & electricity. (S3)* This extract opens a bracket on the positive aspect of frugality, particularly on natural resources; by using the resources wisely and cautiously, we perform a morally upright duty. Sandler and Cafaro (2005) argue that we should make it a habit to maximise our natural resources by using them according to our need and not in our wants or pleasures.

Character Building Theme	Extracts	Moral Reflections
Self-discipline	<i>"As a student I learned the importance of planting more trees." (S10)</i>	Planting tree is a simple act that creates a deeper meaning of environmental awareness
	<i>"We need to throw garbage in the right bin; plant with friends and relatives." (S8)</i>	Collective efforts create macro effect on environmental preservation.
	<i>"Through this poem I also learned the importance of adopting environmental practices such as conserving water & electricity." (S3)</i>	Resource frugality is morally commendable, and it is a necessity.

CONCLUSION

This qualitative study, which uncovered the effectiveness of Now You Hear Me as contextualised environmental poetry in enhancing the learners' literacy and character building has been evident in their written close analysis. Using thematic analysis, the five emergent character-building themes are responsibility, moral awakening, accountability, empathy, and self-discipline. These themes resonate a profound and ethical engagement of learners into ecological constraints, which are also viewed as moral imperatives. Responsibility underscores stewardship as a God-assigned duty for every human being. The learner's literary close analysis recognises their collective negligence on environmental protection, thus conforming them for moral renewal of call as protectors of our nature. This moral framing edifies the moral urgency of environmental failures and the urgency to

commit responsibly for its restoration. Moral awakening catapults as an opportunity for affective and cognitive realisation of our prevalent environmental conditions, which demands a collective and immediate course of action. The learners' moral understanding is driven by ethical and spiritual convictions, which recommend that environmental contextualised poetry can steward transformative values and attitudes of learners. Accountability magnifies that consequences are directly related to actions committed; thus, in the context of this study, the environmental disasters we face today are directly associated with our poor ecological decisions made. Learners recognise that environmental degradation is rooted in humans' abusive nature toward our natural resources. Accountability echoes the moral principle of causality—that our actions bear definite and equal consequences, either destructive or restorative. The prevalence of empathy reflects the undeniable influence of our affective nature into moral formation. When learners empathise with the suffering of our mother nature, they develop a deep sense of understanding that is based on moral values. The character of empathy develops a learner's environmental care and awareness. Furthermore, self-discipline capitalises on the internalisation of moral values and habitual acts.

Now You Hear Me is a contextualised environmental poetry is a learning resource that shapes moral values, environmental consciousness, and character among Grade 11 learners. Through this learning experience, students begin to live with moral virtues, a pivotal element in building a holistic learner that is socially aware, morally upright and environmentally responsible individual.

Thus, this study recommends English language teachers to develop contextualised learning resource such as environmental poetry to enhance writing literacy and promote character building.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Approved letter to conduct the study


Republic of the Philippines
Department of Education
Region II-cagayan valley
Schools Division of Quirino
Cabarroguis National School of Arts and Trades
Gundaway, Cabarroguis, Quirino

June 4, 2025

RICHARD C. SUBIA PhD
School Principal IV
CNSAT, Cabarroguis, Quirino

Sir:

Greetings in the essence of dedicated public service.

This is to seek approval from your office the conduct of the study, "Now You Hear Me: A Contextualized Poetry in Enhancing Literacy and Character Building. This study aims to unravel the character building themes, and moral reflections of Grade 11 learners from their close analysis of the learning resource developed.

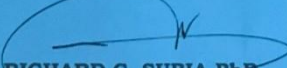
Thank you very much.

Very truly yours,


DAVID B. DICHOSO
Teacher III


KAREN GRACE N. CELESTINO
SEPS-Planning and Research

Approved:


RICHARD C. SUBIA PhD
School Principal IV
CNSAT, Cabarroguis, Quirino

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 **DepED**
MATATAG
Learning

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CAGAYAN VALLEY

Appendix 2

Learning Resource Quality Assurance Conformance Certificate



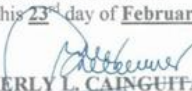
Republic of the Philippines
Department of Education
REGION II – CAGAYAN VALLEY
SCHOOLS DIVISION OF QUIRINO

**LEARNING RESOURCE QUALITY ASSURANCE
CONFORMANCE CERTIFICATE**

We, the members of the Division Learning Resource Quality Assurance Team reviewed, validated, and certified the authenticity of the information/content and compliance to technical and IPR standards of the learning resource material with details shown below:

Title: Now You Hear Me
Author/s: David B. Dichoso
School: Cabarroguis National School of Arts and Trades
Type of Learning Resource: Contextualized Free Verse Poem
Learning Area and Level of Application: 21st Century Literature - SHS

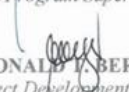
Thereby, this material is approved to be used in the public schools covering the Division. This material is also recommended for further quality assurance of the Regional Office Quality Assurance Division.
Issued this 23rd day of February, 2021.



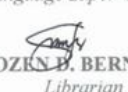
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SHERLY L. CAINGUITAN PhD
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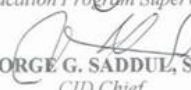
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BIO STATEMENT

Dr David B. Dichoso is a public-school teacher designated at Cabarroguis National School of Arts and Trades, with about 10 years of teaching experience. Dedicated and passionate to uplift the quality of education in the Philippines, he developed innovative resources in English and conducts research on English Language Education. He is a firm believer that learning is a wonderful opportunity that starts from birth and ends to death. Furthermore, he assisted teacher-researchers in crafting action research and innovations. Above all, the researcher believes that faith to God does not deny realities, but it transforms the impossible into something that is beautiful.

Karen Grace N. Celestino is the Senior Education Program Specialist for the Planning and Research section of the Schools Division of Quirino. She was a classroom teacher for seven years in the Department of Education before she was assigned to her current position. Her interest in research began in her undergraduate years when she authored and presented research in pedagogy and in language and literature, and coached co-researchers in conducting feasibility studies. She serves as the research focal person of the division and serves as a Regional Research Technical Working Group member in Cagayan Valley Region, Philippines. Her recent research involvement revolved around organisational communication, human resource development and quality management system, while she also coaches teaching and non-teaching researchers and innovation proponents of SDO Quirino.