

# Chapter 14

## Researching Virtually: Toward a Critical and Sustainable Writing Pedagogy

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This authentic classroom narrative is a product of a drastic paradigm in classroom teaching, specifically in the conduct of research, which demands sustaining academic writing technicalities. However, integrating critical pedagogy seamlessly works with virtual researching as learners maintain active engagement through penetrating the social realities present in the walls of their virtual world. Understanding their society shapes and affects their learning experiences and becomes more meaningful and radical through problem-posing, conscientization, and dialogic engagement. The student-centered, informal, and action-driven approach allowed the learners to freely produce new knowledge following the methodologically influenced approaches of virtual researching. Authentic knowledge solves those identified problems through plans, and proposals to invite critical and sustainable actions. This shared narrative invites the ideas of critical and sustainable writing pedagogy necessary to activate learners' interest in the virtual world as they participate in positive social change.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The post-pandemic education has drastically led classroom instructions and pedagogical practices into virtual modality or modified virtual approaches, such as blended and hyflex. In a third-world country like the Philippines, any form of learning conducted virtually was addressed as anti-poor and oppressive, which impoverishes learning. This reality is especially true for those learners and learning communities without access to e-learning support. Such lack of support can be attributed to the institution's incapacity to provide e-learning instructional materials and references, the school's location, and poverty, which affect them to have essential services, such as internet connection and electricity supplies. Despite these

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-9072-3.ch014

realities, including those arguments and debates involving schools' stakeholders, the country's Department of Education (DepEd) reiterated that learning should continue. It was emphasized by the then Education czar during the heights of the COVID-19 pandemic that "education must continue," making this the country's education battlecry during the global health crisis. For instance, the secretary stated (Hernando-Malipot, 2022):

*We never closed our schools; it's just that we shifted to a different policy, to a mix of methodologies of continuing the learning process of our children. When we locked down the buildings, we did not lock down the process of learning and of education ... learning takes place in other environments...so learning did not stop at all.*

However, even before the global health problem, the goal of continuing education has been the country's priority. Speaking on a different occasion in Dumaguete City, the Philippines, apart from the pandemic, the secretary recounted part of the speech on High-Level Social Development Goals Action Event on Education she presented at the United Nations in New York City on June 28, 2017:

*Whatever is happening in the country, whatever challenges we are facing, education must continue. Education cannot wait; our learners cannot wait. We continue with the process so we can give hope and continuity, and contribute to the normalization of activities in the country.*

With the solid conviction to continue learning despite those challenges affecting the student's learning and the other public clamors for free education, different academic choices, such as modular learning, virtual learning, and hybrid learning, were initially designed and implemented. Institutions and teachers exerted extraordinary effort to provide quality instruction and to learn through the support of national and local governments and some non-government or private sectors. Initially, all these attempts to continue learning have faced negative judgments from the different sectors, like the students, teachers, and other private sectors. It was contested that those implemented learning modes have worsened the inequity between privileged and marginalized learners. This condition may result in learning loss, poverty, and a digital divide. While e-learning and teaching are generally perceived as damaging to the morale of the learners and teachers, several learning standards and competencies miserably fail.

In my class, classroom research, as part of improving instructions, becomes initially more challenging and depressing for my students, especially those in the margins. As part of academic writing, research is an essential platform for investigating observed phenomena in addressing problems that surround them through data-driven details and arguments that build strong academic writing. More so, research is among those disciplines that are highly attended to boost investigations, innovations, and development, particularly in *daily life*. In doing so, they must collect necessary data from the target participants or respondents through surveys, interviews, observations, and other relevant methods to address the research goals or problems. Nevertheless, the closure of their physical classrooms, libraries, and participants' locales has also allowed their research to produce provocative results intended to influence positive changes.

Researching in the Philippine basic education is extensively promoted to meet the target goals of developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills through qualitative and quantitative approaches. With the abstract understanding of criticality, which affects its successful concretization, sustainable education is a supporting frame and reference to solidify the research goal that benefits human lives. While its central concern is to develop environmental literacy and civic engagement to help learners to

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