Stories and Experiences in the Time of Pandemic:
Online Conversations of Filipino Student Affairs and Services Practitioners

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Abstract

The implementation of the enhanced community quarantine as a preventive measure in the widespread of the COVID-19 pandemic has halted the face-to-face delivery of classes in Higher Educational Institutions (HEI) in the Philippines. Many of the institutions have resorted to continue the learning process on online platforms. Because of this, the student affairs and services (SAS) practitioners were compelled to assist the students on the issues and concerns related to online classes and learning. The situation also disrupted the implementation of SAS programs and activities. Using Constructivist Grounded Theory as a method and approach, the participants were engaged in online conversations to gather their stories and experiences as SAS practitioners during the pandemic. This revealed emergent themes from the narratives gathered through focus group discussion format. Findings include issues and challenges on academics, mental health, student development and formation, and the welfare of the practitioners. It also revealed new approaches in responding to the concerns like the gathering of data, migration to online platforms, and skills development and training. The documentation and analysis resulted in a deeper understanding of their experiences prompting actions such as professional development programs and guidelines to assist SAS practitioners in moving forward in the new normal.

Keywords: Issues and Challenges for SAS, New Approaches, Student Affairs and Services in the New Normal, Student Development, Student Welfare

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly affected many countries around the world and the Philippines is among the countries with a rapidly increasing number of positive cases in the Western Pacific region (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020). Because of this, public health measures were put in place which caused limitations on the mobility of the people and suspension of face-to-face delivery of education. This pandemic has certainly caused the largest disruption in education history having affected learners and teachers from around the world (UN, 2020). According to Kandri (2020), the pandemic that has greatly affected the economies around the world has also battered education systems. As a response, many have immediately shifted to remote or online classes which raised numerous concerns coming from students and other stakeholders.

Higher education institutions (HEI) appear to be distinctive and somehow prepared as compared to other levels of education considering that the students are old enough to adjust to the rudiments of online classes and activities and are digital natives who can utilize online platforms. However, the real concern lies in the challenges of choosing the right technologies and approaches for the continuous education and engagement of students (Kandri, 2020). This experience has dramatically transformed the delivery of learning activities as well as student support services and programs.

The HEIs' response to the crisis varies depending on their capacity. Some would depend on whether the government has concrete emergency preparedness plans in place. Others had concerns about the placement of technological systems and facilities, availability and access to the internet, the preparation of hard copies of learning materials, and provision for a conducive working environment for teachers and educational staff (Martinez, 2020). The situation has forced all members of the academic community to find solutions to ensure that the learning process continues despite the threats of the pandemic. It has revolutionized the landscape of education and has forced higher educational institutions to create a new normal that will still be responsive to the learning needs of the students.

The student affairs and services (SAS) is one of the sectors in educational institutions that have taken key roles in attending to the issues, concerns, and well-being of the students during the abrupt transition of the education platform. This is in response to the goal of supporting students in their learning and development (Roberts, 2014; Osfield, et al., 2016). The same is true with Filipino SAS practitioners. Taking by heart their function and mission, they have lived up to the definition of SAS as stated in the CHED Memorandum Order No. 9, series 2013, which describes student affairs and services as "the services and programs in higher education institutions that are concerned with the academic support experience for the student to attain holistic development."

The SAS practitioners have played an important role in being front-liners who received the immediate concerns of the students. They have also greatly contributed to the discussions on how to attend to the needs of the students and provided the necessary data for consideration on the decisions of the top administration. Despite being in the same "storm" as the students and teachers, they have acted responsibly in performing their duties. This study documented and analyzed the stories and experiences of the Filipino SAS practitioners in attending to the concerns of the students during the pandemic through online conversations.

Online Conversations of Filipino SAS Practitioners

Considering the uniqueness of the situation, the SAS practitioners are faced with new challenges in addressing the immediate concerns of the students and of creatively delivering programs and services amidst the pandemic. It is in this light that the officers of the Philippine Association of Practitioners of Student Affairs and Services (PAPSAS), Inc. have decided to reach out to the SAS practitioners in the country through the PAPSAS Online Conversations. The said initiative intends to know and listen to the current concerns and challenges faced by the SAS practitioners in attending to the needs of the students because of the pandemic and the migration of student learning and development to remote or online platforms.

Given the limitations set to curb the crisis, the most convenient option to reach out and connect with the SAS practitioners is through an online gathering and forum. Online interaction has certainly contributed to increasing engagement with civic activities (Pendry & Salvatore, 2015) especially during these times of uncertainties and doubt. Due to the quarantine, many practitioners experienced depleted opportunities to physically gather and implement the usual SAS programs and services. Online interactions have certainly supplemented the need for social interaction as the internet provided social support regardless of the users' physical location (Subrahmanyam, Reich, Waechter, & Espinoza, 2008; Pendry & Salvatore, 2015).

Generally, the goal of the said initiative was to provide an opportunity for the SAS practitioners to have a platform to share their experiences in attending to the concerns of the students in line with the changes in modality of providing student learning and development. The activity also intended to document the actions and initiatives of the SAS practitioners and their respective institutions in response to the needs and concerns of the students during these trying times. The sharing also revealed speculations and projections of the future on how to move forward given the new normal.

The online conversations served as an online forum platform to share voices to gain a better understanding of the participants' present disposition (Pendry & Salvatore, 2015). It presented opportunities in gathering information on the issues, concerns, and challenges in the time of the pandemic. It stimulated discussions on their experiences in performing their role as SAS practitioners during the crisis. It also enabled the sharing of best practices and possible action points that could be responsive to the new normal.

It may be difficult for the SAS practitioners to even begin addressing the concerns of the students. But SAS practitioners have always excelled at adapting and thriving, even in stressful circumstances (McCarthy, 2020). That is why it is important to learn from other sources. This may be done by connecting to the right people and organization. One way is through direct online communication with experts and leaders who have already devised ways of adjusting. Another is through participation in organized online sessions like webinars, online forums, and online conversations.

Most Filipino SAS practitioners may have experienced difficulty in responding to the immediate needs of their students in the time of the pandemic. It was necessary to engage as SAS practitioners surely know the value of supporting one another by sharing lessons learned (McCarthy, 2020) during a crisis. Shared voices and reflections through online means can generate solutions (Sy et al., 2020). The opportunity to engage in online conversations empowered the SAS practitioners to come up with solutions and immediate responses to the expressed issues and concerns.

Constructivist Grounded Theory as Method and Approach

Constructivist grounded theory (CGT) is a method and approach in a qualitative study that is used to understand a social process or phenomenon inductively, and knowledge is constructed from the participants' experiences (Melvin & Ginsburg, 2019). CGT was used as a method and approach in this study as an inductive approach was considered to generate a new framework and propositions that would best explain the data gathered from the experiences of the participants. The approach is grounded in the participants' own words and narratives of the experiences relevant to the topic at hand (Charmaz, 2006). The study is constructivist as the evolving theory or subject experience was constructed by the researcher and the participants. This was easily done considering that the researcher is also a SAS practitioner and the lead facilitator of all the sessions for the online conversations. The researcher managed to have direct access to the data and information provided by the participants.

The participants of the conversations were scheduled per region. This is to easily gather similarities on the concerns experienced in the area. The participants were from Higher Educational Institutions (Private Schools, State Universities and Colleges (SUC), and Local Colleges and Universities (LCU) coming from the NCR, Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao regions. There were also representatives from the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) regional offices (V and IX) who listened to the sharing and noted the concerns of the SAS practitioners.

Sessions	Number of Participants	Private Schools	SUC/LCU	CHED
NCR Batch 1	16	16		
NCR Batch 2	15	14	1	
Luzon Batch 1	11	9	1	1
Luzon Batch 2	7	4	3	
Visayas	11	9	2	
Mindanao	15	10	3	2
Total	**75**	62	10	3

Table 1. Distribution of Participants per Region

The participants of the online conversations were the SAS practitioners handling the different offices/units of student affairs and services in their respective HEIs. Those who participated in the conversations were assigned to guidance and counseling, student development, student leadership and training, student residents, student discipline, scholarships, and general student affairs and services administration. The majority are SAS practitioners in higher education while some are also handling senior high school. One participant is from academic affairs who also shared experiences and actions on the academic side.

The data was gathered through focus group discussions facilitated in the online conversations with the SAS practitioners from the different regions of the country – NCR, Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. The online conversations with participants from these regions were done by batch to ensure that all participants will be able to share their stories and experiences within the given time frame. The participants were properly oriented about the intention and purpose of the activity which is to know and document the stories and experiences of the SAS practitioners in the time of the pandemic. The main question asked was "What is your experience in the time of pandemic?" Probing questions followed picking up from the responses of the participants.

In analyzing the gathered data, the transcript of the conversations was coded to identify patterns. Open coding, where the text was analytically read by the researcher was done followed by the constant comparison of codes to define and refine the features of each category. Axial coding was then done to explore the relationship between the codes that were then organized into themes. Continuous analytical engagement with the data helped the researcher understand the relationship of the codes with the categories and the themes and sub-themes raising the patterns to a conceptual level.

Melvin and Ginsburg (2019) reiterate that the goal of CGT is to develop a conceptual model or theory that describes the social process in question and Charmaz (2006) prefers the term theorizing which is an interpretive practice of engaging with the world and constructing an abstract understanding of it. Adopting CGT as a method and approach in facilitating the online conversation and analyzing the gathered data has enabled the researcher to theorize the experience of the participant SAS practitioners and developed a conceptual model that expressed the realities and response to the phenomenon.

Stories and Experiences of Filipino SAS Practitioners in the Time of Pandemic

The data gathered from the online conversations with the Filipino SAS practitioners was processed and analyzed leading to the documentation of the emergent themes and sub-themes. The iterative categories were translated to emergent themes such as the issues and challenges experienced by the SAS practitioners and the approaches in delivering the programs and services in the new normal. The sub-themes further support the emergent themes and were considered to highlight the common and related stories and experiences of the participants.

	Emergent Themes	Sub-themes
Stories and Experiences of the Filipino SAS Practitioners in the Time of Pandemic	Issues and Challenges Experienced by the SAS Practitioners	Academic Concerns
		Mental Health and Wellness of Students
		Student Training and Activities
		Stranded Students
		Online Behavior of Students
		Job Security of SAS Practitioners
	Approaches in Delivering SAS Programs and Services	Gathering of Data about the Students
		Migration to Online Platforms
		Skills Development and Training

Table 2. Emergent Themes from Stories and Experiences of Filipino SAS Practitioners

Issues and Challenges Experienced by the SAS Practitioners

First on the agenda of the online conversations was to know the stories and experiences of the Filipino SAS practitioners in the time of the pandemic. Common in the facilitated conversations is the narratives that pertain to issues and challenges experienced by the SAS practitioners in addressing student concerns during the pandemic. Ludeman et al. (2009) posited that higher education institutions must have a set of values and principles that accounts for the expressed needs of the students. The imposition of the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) disrupted the education sector and school officials had to come up with immediate actions. It was not only the academics that were abruptly affected but also the functions of the student affairs and services. The SAS practitioners have played an important role in dealing with the situation of the students and the online conversations became a platform for them to share their notable stories about issues and challenges they experienced.

Academic Concerns

All of the SAS practitioners who participated in the conversations have shared their stories on how their respective institutions have handled the academics. The colleges and universities following the new calendar were in the middle of their term/semester when the ECQ-suspension of classes was declared. Those who follow the old calendar are in the latter part of their school year having their final examinations and summer activities disrupted by the situation. This prompted the HEIs concerned to migrate to online platforms to continue with the learning process. Teachers and administrators were tasked to revise course syllabi to make them adaptive to the remote teaching modes whether synchronous or asynchronous (Simbulan, 2020).

Most of the HEIs have addressed these concerns and practiced leniency and flexibility in the completion of online requirements. Others have done the extra mile of reaching out to each of their students to know about their conditions and apply other modes of a more applicable learning process. They have also determined the end of the term/semester and implemented a grading system favorable to the students. Many have also given refunds of unused school fees.

Mental Health and Wellness of the Students

The experience of the pandemic and the limitations set by the ECQ have caused additional stress on the students and other members of the academic community. It took a while before they were able to adjust to the new learning and living system taking into primary account their health and safety as well as the needs of their own families. These changes have aggravated some pre-existing conditions and mental health concerns of some students.

Mental health issues are believed to be the leading impediment to academic success and students' mental health in higher education has become an increasing concern as the COVID-19 pandemic has brought this vulnerable population to renewed focus (Son, et al., 2020). That is why most HEIs represented in the conversations immediately activated their guidance and counseling services and offered online counseling. Some considered the ethical issues and appropriateness of the situation as limiting factors in delivering online counseling sessions while others have become bolder in finding ways to extend psychological assistance to the students in need.

Many guidance counselors took advantage of the free online webinars on topics that will help improve their skills in facilitating online counseling activities. Some institutions have also provided support for counselors in terms of equipment and connectivity to deliver this kind of service for the students and other members of the academic community.

Student Training and Activities

The ECQ did not only affect the conduct of the academic classes but also disrupted the scheduled activities for student development and training and other regular school activities like graduation. Because of the pandemic, the SAS practitioners had to defer the conduct of their regular activities including leadership training, the election of officers, retreat and recollections, outreach activities, entrance exams and admission of new students, orientation for new students, and awards and recognitions.

In consideration of the health and safety of the participants and observance of social distancing, many of these activities were no longer be conducted physically. They are already considering migrating the programs and activities to online platforms but there is still no clarity on how it will be done and if it will effectively achieve the program goals and objectives.

The student leaders of some of the colleges and universities have also initiated online activities to divert the attention of the students and promote holistic development and wellness amidst the pandemic. Despite the low turnout of participants, the student leaders still managed to facilitate the activities and provide a sense of connection that is believed to lessen the students' feeling of isolation (McCarthy, 2020). The student leaders have also helped collect data and information particularly on the living condition, needs, and situations of their fellow students. Although done online, interaction with fellow students would still be a defining experience of college life (Soon, 2020).

Stranded Students

Another issue handled by many of the participating SAS practitioners was the concern on students who were stranded in the college or university dormitories and nearby private boarding houses. Because of the limitation on the availability of transportation and the strict quarantine rules implemented in some areas, many students were not able to go home to their respective families. These are students residing in dormitories, who are either scholars or student athletes, and the regular and international students renting rooms or apartments who hailed from other cities, provinces, and countries. The same is true in the case of students stranded at the place of their internship or On-the-Job Training.

As a response, the SAS practitioners have initiated donation drives and collected support from the administration, alumni, and other stakeholders to provide for the basic needs, like food, of the stranded students. Some of them have also coordinated with the local government units for assistance in bringing home the students living in nearby towns and cities. Some of the students heeded the free transportation services while others opted to stay in their dormitories and boarding houses as they find it more conducive for them especially the availability of internet connection for their online learning.

Online Behavior of Students

One observation that is noteworthy to include in this report is the behavior shown by students online towards the decisions of the different higher educational institutions. Many were triggered by the determination of the schools to continue the learning process by migrating the classes to online platforms. This has earned various criticisms from the students and other parties that were immensely expressed in the different social media platforms.

Many have expressed their disappointments as they argue that the present situation does not promote a healthy learning environment. Some also claimed that continuous online classes are affecting their mental health. They have shared valid reasons while some have posted derogatory remarks towards their schools and their administration.

Some of the participants have shared how they responded to this issue. Many of them handled the situation in a positive and formative manner and have reached out to those students who have strong positions and comments online. They also practiced maximum tolerance and took the situation as an opportunity to dialogue with the students.

Job Security of SAS Practitioners

The current situation did not only cause stress and anxiety on the students but also with many SAS practitioners as they fear the uncertainties that go along with the pandemic. The business side of education most especially for private HEIs was affected. The participants representing this group have shared the impending possibility of applying for the no work no pay policy on them. This is due to the deficiency in the school's cash flow as they have not fully collected payments for tuition and fees.

They have also expressed their worries that their job functions may not be relevant and useful in this kind of situation which may result in being furloughed or downsized. They fear that they might be counted in the estimated 5 million Filipinos who would lose their jobs to the pandemic (Rodriguez, 2020). This fear stems from the premise that the SAS work relies mostly on close interactions and relationships with the students and translating it to a remote platform remains to be a challenge. Others were able to creatively justify the continuation of their duties and responsibilities and submit productivity reports while working at home to their school officials in exchange for their continuous pay while some have resorted to using their leave credits.

Approaches in Delivering SAS Programs and Services

Other than the issues and challenges experienced by the SAS practitioners, the conversation also opened discussions on the action points and plans in moving forward. All the participants acknowledged the fact that there is a need to adapt to new systems. Many have already started discussions within their units on reinventing the delivery of their programs and services. They focused on the most immediate concerns and explored technological alternatives as a new approach to responding. Some are still lost on how to move forward and lack guidance from their school officials as they are still busy addressing the academic concerns and business continuity of the institution. Just the same, many were able to share initial initiatives as an immediate response.

Gathering of Data on the Condition of Students

The initial response of most SAS practitioners a few weeks after the class suspension was to gather data. They have conducted surveys to know the condition of their students and their capability to participate in online classes. The data gathered served as one of the bases for the decisions of the school officials on how to deal with the needs and concerns of the students. Many of the participants expressed their intention to continue gathering information about the students so they will be guided on how to proceed in continuously delivering services for them. They were so also considering strategies on how to reach students who are not online.

Migration to Online Platforms

All of the participants have seen the value of technology as an alternative platform in these trying times. According to Soon (2020), "E-learning has become a vital tool to ensure the continuity of learning and education" in the time of the pandemic. Many HEIs were already in the process of migrating their programs and services online. All agreed that despite the situation, student formation and development should not stop and so they are considering maximizing the use of technology and connect the students with online services. Some have already started encouraging student leaders to conduct online activities. They also plan to deliver their development programs in webinar format. Others shared that they still need to

figure out how to conduct other activities like the election of officers, orientation for incoming students, entrance examinations, etc. They also plan to revisit their policies on student discipline and review how to make it responsive to the current scenario.

Skills Development and Training

In anticipation of the changes in the delivery of programs and services, the SAS practitioners also mentioned the need to build the capacity in using the available technology. It will entail the development of new skills and readiness from among their staff as some are not yet well-versed with the online platforms. They will have to learn how to produce online materials that are interactive and interesting. The participating administrators shared the importance of being adept with risk and crisis management to handle certain situations similar to this. They also need to be creative in thinking of ways to continuously deliver for the students. They will also have to be innovative and consider alternative practices to effectively reinvent the programs and services. The training can improve student learning in educational programming to facilitate the goals aligned to the learning goals of HEI (Ludeman et al., 2009; Toquero, C.M., 2020)

Student Affairs and Services in the New Normal

After careful analysis of the gathered stories and experiences of the SAS practitioners, it was then theorized that the main subject is on the state of Student Affairs and Services in the New Normal. Ideally, SAS practitioners must gain a better understanding of the needs of the students to serve in the new normal (McCarthy, 2020). Through the analytical engagement with the developed themes, certain action points and a conceptual model were conceived to help in the seamless transition of SAS practitioners to the new normal.

The action points must be led by the following key players involved:
1. *Commission on Higher Education* – to develop and release a standard guide for all Filipino SAS practitioners on the flexible delivery of SAS programs and services in the new normal. This guide may be based on the current CMO governing the SAS practice in the country which could be translated in practical ways on handling specific functions and expectations from the SAS sectors of student development, student welfare, and the institutional programs.
2. *PAPSAS, Inc.* – to initiate professional development programs that will enhance the skills and capabilities of the SAS practitioners in leading and managing their offices emphasizing the impacts of the new normal. This may be done through webinars and opportunities for online sharing of best practices. The association may also lead in benchmarking with international organizations and institutions through collaborative programs and platforms that will help expose the Filipino SAS practitioners.
3. *SAS practitioners* - as an output of gathering their shared stories and experiences, the following salient points that may be considered as guidelines in addressing the conditions brought about by the new normal are hereby given:
a. Prioritize the safety of the students and employees at all times.
b. Set clear strategic direction in handling and adjusting to the new normal.
c. Develop internal guidelines that will serve as points for consideration.
d. Ensure continuity of the delivery of programs and services.
e. Assess the different situations and capacities of all students and the employees.
f. Build scenarios and consider the worse and best cases possible.
g. Create programs that will apply to the situation of each group of students.

h.   Set realistic expectations on the workload and deliverables of personnel.

i.   Encourage the development of new skills especially in the use of technology.

j.   Add a personal touch that can humanize online student affairs and services.

k.   Involve and consult students in the planning and decisions that would affect them.

l.   Expand your network and benchmark for best practices from other institutions and organizations.

The issues and challenges experienced as well as the new approaches in the delivery of the programs and services may be simplified with the consideration of the 3 Is – *Innovation, Involvement, and Infrastructure*. The different sub-themes were clustered according to the appropriate response that should be given.

Emergent Themes	Sub-themes	Response
Issues and Challenges Experienced by the SAS Practitioners Approaches in Delivering Programs and Services in the New Normal	Academic Concerns	Innovation
	Gathering of Data about the Students	
	Student Training and Activities	
	Mental Health and Wellness of Students	Involvement
	Stranded Students	
	Online Behavior of Students	
	Job Security of SAS Practitioners	Infrastructure
	Migration to Online Platforms	
	Skills Development and Training	

Table 3. Responses to the Themes

Another way of looking at the themes that iteratively emerged in the course of discussions is through the conceptual model that can help facilitate the development of response in addressing the need for the SAS practitioners to be able to cope with the impacts of the new normal.
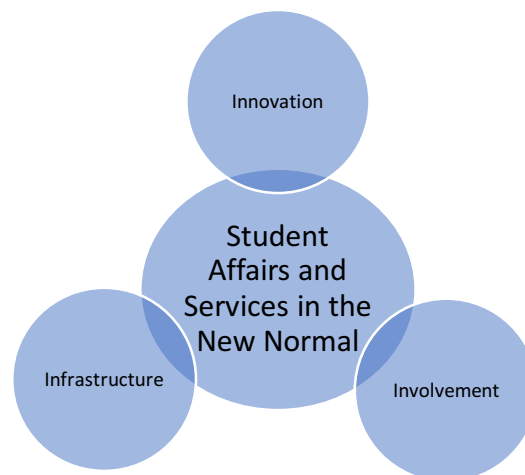

Figure 1: The 3Is Model for Student Affairs and Services in the New Normal

This model highlights the consideration of the 3 Is as practitioners reimagine student affairs and services in the new normal.

Innovation should be considered in the delivery of programs and services as the pandemic may also be seen as an opportunity to upgrade the mode of delivery of education and divert attention to emerging technologies (Toquero, 2020). Innovation is not only limited to the use of advanced technology, it also encourages the sense of creativity in implementing online activities and interactions. It may not be a creation of a new program and service but could be the continuation of old and usual activities delivered innovatively. This could also open opportunities for students to share their creative and innovative ideas.

The involvement of students in online activities may truly be a concern as SAS practitioners keep in mind their varied situations and limitations. However, it is still important to encourage the students to engage and support their need to connect and lessen the feeling of isolation (McCarthy, 2020). Increasing student participation may be done by clearly orienting them to the value of their participation and what they can gain with the engagement. Students may be involved by giving them roles and the tasks of organizing online events which may also develop their project management skills. It also entails implementing interesting and quality activities that students can relate to. There is also a need to increase the online presence of the SAS office and the student leaders to remain in the consciousness of the students catered.

Infrastructure pertains to the platforms that will be used to deliver the SAS programs and services. These are the online spaces where the students are and the SAS practitioners must be there as well. It is important to keep these spaces safe and conducive for learning and interaction that promoted the building of healthy relationships. Having the infrastructure is also about having the systems in place like clear policies and guidelines that will assist the students and the SAS practitioners in traversing the paths of the new normal. Inclusion and accessibility must also be considered in setting up the appropriate infrastructure.

The propositions and conceptual model may be applied generally as SAS practitioners take the lead in inspiring students towards productivity and continuous development as they surpass the challenges of the new normal.

Conclusions

The stories shared by the participants have revealed important points in attending to student affairs and services in the new normal. The insights coming from the discussions from fellow SAS practitioners resulted in the following realizations:
Disruption in the learning process – the pandemic has surely affected a lot, if not all, aspects of human life including education. The quarantine period has affected the delivery of education and has abruptly disrupted the learning process. It has changed the general narrative of physical classroom learning founded on interaction and relationships. Other aspects of student life were also compromised as there is a need to defer the activities intended for student development and welfare.

Validation and Evolution of the Role of SAS Practitioners – the actions taken as a response to the situation have validated the role of the SAS practitioners. It emphasized how supportive the SAS work is with the academics and other sectors in the school community. It also showed how responsive the SAS practitioners were in addressing the concerns of the students. They served as a bridge that connected the students to the rest of the academic community. The general role of the SAS practitioners will remain the same however, the manner of executing the function will again have to evolve and be attuned with the changing times. This extraordinary time showed the dynamism of the SAS practice. It revealed how the practitioners

are quick to respond and in developing strategies keeping in mind the overall welfare of the students.

The Need for Continuity – the SAS practitioner recognizes that the support for students must be the top priority in a crisis like this. It is necessary to ensure the continuity of providing services for the students. This was evident in the desire of all the participants to develop online versions of the programs and services and make them accessible despite the limitation on physical contact. The online versions may not be as effective as the usual format but it is better than not offering anything at all. To continue, the SAS practitioners also aired out the need for support from the school administration.

Readiness of the SAS Practitioners in Response to the New Normal – being prepared and capacitated is important especially in using the modes of technology that would allow continuity of the services. The training and skills development may be initiated institutionally and through public offerings. This will also make the SAS practitioners more confident in handling their jobs and managing the expectations both of the students and the school administration.

There is also a need to improve future interactions in which the participants have mentioned the involvement of more SAS practitioners in the online activities and for the key players like the PAPSAS, Inc., as the national association for Filipino SAS practitioners, to organize online seminars and training programs, and to provide opportunities for more conversations, continuous learning, and sharing of best practices.

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