

JOURNAL MAKING IN INSTRUCTION (TEACHING), RESEARCH & EXTENSION WORK

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Abstract: This paper focuses on the advantageous use of journal in instructional, extension and research work. With the current trend of teacher's involvement in three — instruction, extension, and research — sometimes four (including production) functions, journal-making process can never be underestimated. From simple reflective statements and insights to more analytical and in-depth viewpoints regarding the events of the day, or the fieldwork's data gathered in the field, until the process of writing and re-writing the actual output, journal making helps attain what is called as intersubjectivity and multidisciplinary. This makes a teacher, community/extension worker, or researcher, a participant to the whole process of development.

Key words: Journal, teaching, research, extension, intersubjectivity

JOURNAL MAKING & TEACHING-LEARNING PROCESS

Most of the universities and colleges around the world require or encourage teachers to engage in all three (even sometimes four) functions: instruction, extension, and research. Requiring teachers to engage in other

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fields apart from teaching is quite advantageous to both the school and the teachers. Teachers are able to make themselves available to all the clientele of the university or college they are connected to; and the college/university can offer to the internal and external community the inputs and outputs of the teachers. The result of this is a more dynamic view of education process — where teachers become genuine agents of change and become sources of inspiration to other members of society.

Putting it straight, this article explores the process of journal making, the *whys* and the *hows* of it — in instruction (teaching), research-extension or community work in relation to the teachers' multidisciplinary role in the academic and social community. It debunks the notion that journal is only for the elementary and high school students, dealing with the crushes and the frustrations they encountered during the day, for instance. Instead, it promotes the idea of *intersubjectivity* and *multidisciplinarity* in instruction, research, extension and community work. Whereas before, the idea of journal making was merely towards self-expression, nowadays, it is also geared towards development. I discuss here journal-making, its uses in pedagogy, extension and research work, in the context of holistic view of development.

I should define the term *journal* first to situate my discussion. To talk about journal making and journal writing in teaching, extension and research, I should go back to the very basic concept of journal and journal process. *Journal*, coming from a Latin word, *diurnalis*, which means daily, is commonly defined as “a personal record of occurrences, experiences, and reflections kept on a regular basis” (*American Heritage Dictionary Online* 2006). It can also be a “diary” in which one is able to recount his/her daily activities.” Hence, time-wise, journal writing is done regularly. Process-wise, it is (an-almost) habitual listing of events, capturing images in one's surrounding areas, and recording his/her reflections, feelings, observations and criticisms, in and about his/her daily tasks. In general, therefore, anything and everything could be written in a journal.

I cite here my personal experience to situate my journal writing and the process of journal writing in my actual academic tasks. When I was in elementary and high school, I wrote my journals out of obedience. I was compelled to do so because it was a requirement in my English subject. I wove words out of compulsion, not out of love and creativity. Never did I

realize that writing my journals was a very effective tool for my further writing and speaking ventures. It made me think faster and record my thoughts more effectively using vocabulary that was initially a part of my brain (a stock-vocabulary). Now, I still do write journals not only for myself, but also for my family (especially my sons). My personal experiences of writing my reflections and jotting down notes on paper on a regular basis have turned out to be very useful in my academic life, especially to my teaching and other related tasks.

In the paper I presented at the “*Humaniora dan Media*” International Symposium sponsored by the Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM),² I discussed about my insights on teaching students with the use of journal-making not only regarding the subject itself but also any other topics that they could think of which will also enhance their creativity. To cite a few lines from my paper:

Every week, either in English or Literature class, I encourage students to submit a journal of their own. Here, they can include anything that they want to: thoughts for the (week) days, remarks about their loved ones, inspiring moments (and even despairing ones), fears, dreams, and others. Those who are good at drawing are encouraged to draw, or sketch, or simply doodle, their thoughts and desires. The exercise is for the students to simply be expressive and creative (because that is the ultimate objective of Literature), but as always, I am surprised to find out that students can be more creative than I can expect. Some of them make their own origami³, some paste photos of their childhood, and some write impressive poems and haikus⁴. These outputs have surpassed the simple and original objective: they create more, they express more.

Journal making as a process has been so effective in eliciting warm and enthusiastic responses from my students. It also has made a closer relationship between me and my students because through the journals that I check every week, I am able to read personal and academic concerns of the students; then I have a chance to call their attention to whatever difficulties

they encounter about the subject and their studies in general. To quote in the same article:

Relative to journal making, one memorable value that I want to share with you is my students' way of approaching me for some disturbing thoughts that they have (such as, probing illnesses or quarreling parents); or their warm smiles as they pass by, because I simply write short remarks and messages regarding their concerns. Trusting me of their private concerns, I try, as much as I can, to listen to them how busy I am, and always see to it that there's something they could read at the end of their journal entries for the week — an encouraging remark, a suggestion for a weakness in tenses or grammar, or a note to just "see me" after 5 pm.

In the same article, I emphasized that the use of journal makes the teacher available to the students *realistically*, rather than *virtually* (as in the mere use of DVD players, film analyses, etc.). The warm relationship between the students and the teacher, as well as the creativity enhancement, may never be substituted by any other modern-post-modern electronic device. The same article focused on the instructional (or teaching) side of the whole teaching process — that however advanced the technology is journal making plays a very important role for creativity, positive relationship between the teacher and the students, and follow-up of the lessons.

My personal experiences on journal making in the context of teaching and learning literature, through the previous insights in teaching using journal as a tool, serve as a basic ground to what I want to put forward to in this article: that research and extension work may also benefit from the use of journals as a tool to further strengthen data from the community and the research field. I wish then to relate this argument to the previous (and traditional) notions of *objectivity* and *subjectivity*: that everything that could be *quantified* was *objective* and everything that couldn't be quantified was *subjective*. Many disciplines, especially the applied science categories, would previously claim a *black-white* dichotomy of objectivity and subjectivity in research and development. Hence, for many people involved in research, in particular, because a finding was *statistically quantified* already showed

that the research was *purely* and *definitely objective*; while would claim something that was a product of interviews, oral artifacts, group discussions, as *subjective*, and hence, accordingly, *not* a valid proof of research. Thankfully, nowadays, the lines between the so-called *objectivity* and *subjectivity* have become so thin. The *interfacing*, or *convergence*, or *merging* (whatever jargon one wants to use) of both *objective* and *subjective* data, welcomes the idea of *intersubjectivity*.

Intersubjectivity, that method of connecting as many different perspectives on the same data as possible,” (Chiseri-Strater and Sunstein 1997:7) opens and encourages the concept of “interstices” or “gaps” — either in research or community/extension work. These gaps welcome the possibility that no hardcore experimental, quantified researches and findings are definitely *objective*; no socially-researched or community-based researches are purely *subjective* (or qualitative). This is because there is no single area or factor that affects a study or research and its would-be findings. The researcher, or community worker himself or herself and his/her own subjectivities (like interests, age, race, etc.) are already a contributing element towards *subjectivity*. Hence, no one should claim that a certain study, project or program is *purely* and *exclusively* objective. The voices of many elements — the researcher, the respondents or subject, the hard data (or artifacts) available in the periphery — already comprise that which is called *intersubjectivity*. Hence, the in-depth process of *intersubjectivity* and *multidisciplinarity* that I have referred to above situates the process of journal making into the nuances of research and community/extension work.

How do journal and/or journal making come in to the picture of research and community development? Why should a research-cum-community worker deal with journal making? How can s/he do it without going out of the bounds of research and community work? I discuss each of these in this article within the context of an experiential learning, from an ethnographic and cultural study.

I mentioned earlier that in any research or community work, varied voices interplay — of which process is called *polyphony of voices* (Chiser-Strater and Sunstein 1997:59). The data from the field — be it a rice or corn field or a town plaza — together with the material artifacts (or the data that supplement the field data), as well as the *voice* (the positioning) of the researcher, interplay with each other that produces the blend of

objectivity and subjectivity. Nowadays, with the complexity of the world we live in, a certain research is not any more geared towards the product (the material findings) alone but also the process derived from the whole experience. In short, research or community work is geared towards the total *humanization* of the world, not its *dehumanization*. Therefore, researches should also focus on the data that the researcher in the previous days has failed to capture. These are the non-verbal cues, the lisps and the stammers of the respondents, the time and place limitations of the interviews, and even the reflective and intuitive insights of both the researcher/community worker and the respondent/s. Then, as the researcher-development worker gathers all these non-verbal cues and insights, s/he should now apply what Chiserie-Strater and Sunstein (1997:57) call as *stepping-in-stepping out*. To put it simply, the researches should gather a balanced set of *objective* and *subjective* data. Through these, facts from the field, supplemented with the facts from the material artifacts, and the critical eyes of the researcher/community worker, harmoniously meld to form a more humanistic and more humane approach of research and community/extension work.

HOW TO ACCOMPLISH JOURNAL MAKING IN EXTENSION AND RESEARCH WORK

Since a journal enables a person to reflect, give insights, and learn from his/her experiences from the field, it makes his/her involvement personal yet objective. It captures not only the visible, but also the invisible. Hence, even the unspoken and would-be utterances, color codes — like the houses' paints, flowers in the garden, etc., the arrangements, whether symmetrical or asymmetrical, would be recorded. Then, these records lead to a deeper and more insightful way of reading a *text* (the research itself or the data found in the field) which in turn provides a humane yet objective view of development.

In the context of extension work, journal making and community work are both about communication and participation. Extension work ultimately aims to connect and interconnect; journal making enables one to be connected yet detached from the reality (because it provides some creative ways and avenues to the writer, extension worker and researcher). A journal provides the data to make the extension worker subjective yet objective. What the researcher/worker cannot remember, s/he can take from the data through

the journal. What s/he wants to detach himself/herself from (because the experience already gives him/her more room for attachment), s/he can rely on the journal.

From a practical and do-able standpoint, how is a journal done to serve the purpose of subjective-objective reading of the text? I would like to cite Guia-Padilla (1999:315-318) a feminist researcher on rural women in the Philippines who realizes that, anyone doing a life history approach and anyone who adopts journal for research, accomplishes an “acknowledgment of the changes brought about in ourselves as a result of the (research experience) and further realization of how such changes affect the research from that point forward.” In short, the journal not only fills in the gaps within the data previously gathered through other methods such as questionnaire, among others, but also paves the way for a “participatory” involvement of the researcher or worker. Goodman says that, “your role as reader is active, and it is positioned, or influenced, by a range of factors... Just as the position of authors may influence their choice of subject-matter and styles of writing, your position as reader will affect your interpretation...” (1996:135).

The journal, then, provides data for the research as well as data for the researcher or worker towards self-discovery. Changes in the methodology or approach, or even in personal relationships between the researcher and the community worker with his/her respondents or discussants, may unexpectedly happen along the way.

SUGGESTED WAYS

I suggest the following ways or steps to accomplish journal making as a tool in both extension and community work:

1. Always include descriptive, topographical statements not given in the questionnaire or interviews.
2. Record the details of interviews — even the rubbing of elbows or the winking of the eyes. Such non-verbal cues definitely provide significant meanings.
3. Capture unrecorded moments (through tape), such as, the times that barangay captain or town leader has uttered “*Ah...*,” or the times when the leader of the youth said “*Ammm...*” Similar situations evoke

meanings of hesitation or indecisiveness, or even social influences, as the case may be.

4. Recall right after the interviews and/or focus group discussions (fgd) the actual scenario in the field. The blistering heat of the sun or the crying baby held by her mother might have been a factor in the way she has answered the crucial question one threw.
5. Never fail to interpret these nuances based on the objectives of your extension or community work.
6. Include these nuances in your general data. Be able to categorize these “found” and indispensable data according to your methodologies and chapters.
7. Make these additional data as a means to re-investigate/re-view your methodologies and findings.
8. Be able to critique. Your descriptive as well as interpretive statements should not end there. The given data may help you to provide an overall critical view of the findings and the status quo of the community, for instance.
9. These data may help you if you need to go back to the field to re-validate or re-situate your problem and methodologies.
10. All these may help you acquire a balanced view of your investigation, so don't forget to “step-in” or “step-out.” Never be judgmental of situations and events, but never be too detached that you treat your data and the whole process of extension and research as “robots.”

All these and many other non-verbal cues and unuttered discourses are equally significant, or sometimes more important, than the ones provided by the respondents during the actual interviews, or those written or ticked on in the questionnaire. A hungry farmer-respondent, in the first place, would just check *yes* or *no* item instead of explaining his/her side further.

What the researcher or community worker should do is to include these gaps found in the field, and should allow them to be a part of the overall analyses. What the journal data make, among other data from life history approach or focus group discussion, is a researcher's or community worker's chance to go beyond descriptive analysis of data. Instead, a deeper reading and critique of the given data are realized because of the complement between the uttered and the unuttered, the verbal and the non-verbal. As pointed out earlier, the so-called experimental researchers used to ignore

these kinds of data. Unknowingly, they failed to include the more objective, more felt and emphatic way of research and extension work.

CONCLUSION

Journal making acquires the essential component of instruction (teaching), research and extension. It debunks the notion that personal entries (like journals) have no way in research and extension. It rather welcomes inter-subjectivity through a mixture of various voices of target culture and recipient culture via the use of journals in the process of instruction, research and extension that academics engage in nowadays either as a requirement or as a need.

Journal, or journal making, is not any more only for younger siblings, nephews and nieces, daughters and granddaughters, but also for everyone — including the extension workers and researchers. If extension-community work and research aim to help people become sufficient and empowered, journal making helps them help and re-discover themselves as well.

After all, journal making, complementary to other approaches used in the field — whether it be a classroom, rice field, or an ongoing festivity — only result in a humane and understanding worker and researcher: a teacher, community worker and researcher who has heart and passion, not one who is overtly cold and mechanical. As a result, the process and the data s/he will generate are those that are a balance of *objectivity* and *subjectivity*.

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