

THE JOURNAL PROJECT (JOURNPRO): A PEDAGOGICAL INTERVENTION IN IMPROVING STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH REFLECTIVE JOURNAL



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ABSTRACT

The Journal Project or JournPro is a proposed pedagogical project which aimed to improve the writing skills among Grade 7 students at Mamplasan National High School through self-conceptualized reflective journal. Forty Grade 7 students from heterogeneous sections were randomly selected to participate in the study. Under quasi-experimental study, the participating students were assessed based on their pre-writing and post-writing activities focusing on six-subgroup indicators such as diction, technical qualities, content, purpose and audience, organization and development, and style. Using Wilcoxon Rank Sum Test, the results showed that there were significant improvements on the post-writing test median scores of the students after JournPro intervention. This indicates the effectiveness of the facilitating tool in enhancing students' writing skills.

Keywords: reflective journal, writing skills, pedagogical intervention

INTRODUCTION

Writing is considered as an essential process in nurturing and strengthening students' language acquisition, as well as communication skills (Cole & Feng, 2015). This incorporates creative inspiration, critical thinking, and reflective expression that completes one's cohesive manuscript. Thus, it underlines the grammatical and lexical attributes in which teachers strive to impart towards their students. On the strength of these materials, the Department of Education (DepEd) has vowed to improve the students' macro skills, like writing, through the implementation of K to 12 curriculum as mandated by the Republic Act 10533 also known as the Enhanced Basic Education Act (Christzer, 2018). However, equalizing its importance is the difficulty to teach the skill.

In spite of the pedagogical efforts, teachers have to consider several principles and theories to address the writing concerns of their students (Gepila, 2015). They should also synthesize the context of learning such as one's culture, experience, and identity. Moreover, the success of a student in learning how to write depends on how exposed he or she is in various writing activities. This trepidation became more prominent as the teachers and learners encounter the pandemic situation due to COVID-19.

In the midst of the severe disruption, teachers as primary

facilitators experience academic struggles unto how they can still commit with the quality of education through distant learning. DepEd Secretary Briones (2020) as cited by Hernando-Malipot (2020), adhered her pronouncement that "education must continue" despite the current condition. In actual fact, the issuance of DepEd Order No. 007, s. 2020 School Calendar and Activities for School Year 2020-2021 and Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan, displays the effort of the department in ensuring the health and safety of the students and the whole school communities in the course of educational continuity. (Llego, 2020)

Mamplasan National High school (MNHS), on the other hand, commits to support the DepEd's "newfound purpose" of the Sulong EduKalidad campaign in providing quality standards of education in the continuity of learning amid this crisis. In accordance with the Learner Enrollment Survey Form (LESF) result and such considerations, the best-fit school learning delivery of MNHS is Modular Distance Learning (MDL). Modular Distance Learning involves individualized instruction that allows learners to use self-learning modules (SLMs) in print format. The modules are either delivered at home or picked up from the school. Students are not required to have internet connections but are encouraged to contact their teachers online or through text messages when needed.

From the first quarter's denouement of this school year, the researcher, who handles Grade 7 students in English subject, conducted post-quarter survey assessment to his students regarding their MDL experience, specifically the self-learning module. The students answered the survey through Google Forms. The focal point of the questionnaire seeks to find where the students struggled the most in answering their modules. The survey reveals that 82% of the respondents had difficulty in answering subjective-type of assessment (e.g. essay, explanation, etc.), 12% expressed difficulty in answering objective assessments (e.g. multiple choice, alternate response, etc.), and 6% showed no difficulty in answering their self-learning modules.

In lieu with the post-quarter assessment, the researcher found out the struggles of the students in answering questions that need expound explanation and composition. This implies that there is a need in improving students' writing skills, specifically explanation and critical thinking, in order for them to surpass their struggles in modular distance learning.

To address this pedagogical setback, teachers should engross in interventions and learning activities through the use of multimedia instruments (Conole, 2013). Practical and customary techniques in multimedia integration and styles should be put into manner. Through this, there could be technological

solutions to the writing problems. One of this multimedia style is the use of reflective journal.

Reflective journal writing is an effective pedagogical technique that facilitates students in learning through writing. Furthermore, this writing activity develops a critical aspect of knowledge processing that articulate connections between new information and schema. This leads the students to improve their learning as they are given the chance to think thoroughly while they reflect on what they have studies. (Farrah, 2012)

What is more, through reflective journal writing, students can also achieve critical thinking progress (Colley, Bilics, & Lerch, 2012). When one writes in his or her own journal, he or she is given the opportunity to synthesize his personal principles and expand his crucial probe in much more innocuous environment. Self-reflective writing, per se, helps the students to express their thoughts, beliefs, and experiences without apprehension that other people will judge their writing abilities.

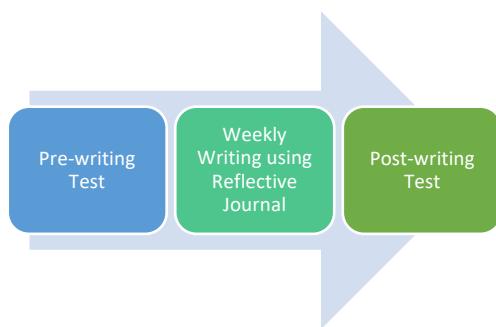
Adhering to the principles of the New Normal of Basic education, specifically the continuity of providing access, quality, and liberating education whilst ensuring the safety and welfare of the learners, this action research aimed to improve the students' writing skills using reflective journal, in which the proponent calls it as, The Journal Project or JournPro.

METHODOLOGY

This action research introduced the use of reflective journal in improving students' writing skills. The reflective journal, which is called JournPro or Journal Project, is a self-conceptualized and digitalized journal which has a weekly entry from the students to practice their writing ability by answering various self-reflective activities.

The research adopted the Solution Strategy Flowchart in order to conduct the study following a strict implementation of its process.

Figure 1. Solution Strategy Flowchart



From the figure above, the flow of the research started with the pre-writing test. The students synchronously took their pre-writing assessment through Google Docs as the baseline of improvement analysis of the intervention. They were given a specific topic to discuss, and they had 30-45 minutes to submit their written works.

After the pretest, the students received their reflective journal, virtually or physically, depending on their desire. Those who preferred

digital JournPro, had the soft copies of their journal in PowerPoint format. On the other hand, students who preferred the physical copy received their journals, through their parents/guardians, during the distribution-retrieval day of the school.

For the whole quarter, the students crafted their reflective journals, and submitted them weekly. The submission scheme was based on their receipt preference.

After the quarterly intervention, the students synchronously took their post-writing assessment through Google Docs. They were given a specific topic to discuss, and they had 30-45 minutes to submit their written works.

The respondents for this research were the enrolled Grade 7 students at Mamplasan National High School for school year 2020 – 2021. All grade 7 students were under Modular Distance Learner. They utilized self-learning printed modules as their primary learning materials.

Each section in grade 7 was heterogeneously grouped. This means that the students were sectioned diversely. Consequently, the researcher formed a special class with 40 students to conduct this research.

The primary research instrument used is the self-conceptualized weekly reflective journal, which is called as The Journal

Project (JournPro). JournPro was produced in digital or in print, depending on students' preference. This researcher-made tool includes *Weekly Self-Assessment Exercise*, *Wrap-Up Quotation*, *Freedom Page*, and *Writing Practice*.

By using reflective journal, the students were expected to be at ease in answering subjective forms of activities such as writing essays, giving opinions, and other writing assessments in their self-learning modules. Furthermore, the students were also aimed to learn how to self-assess and evaluate their writing progress from its weekly writing advancement report.

To describe the students' writing improvement quantifiably, this research used the modified Six-Subgroup Quality Scale by Ransdell & Levy (1996). This rating scale measured students' writing skills during their pretest and posttest focusing on diction, technical qualities, content, purpose and audience, organization and development, and style. Thus, it was a 4-level scale to avoid the neutrality of the test results.

RESULTS

After gathering the necessary data, the researcher statistically analyzed their pretest and posttest results through the help of his statistician. They transcribed the scores of the students, and used the Likert scale to verbally interpret the

data. This was conducted to prove the effectiveness of using The Journal Project as pedagogical intervention in improving the students' writing skills.

The median was utilized to identify the pretest and posttest scores of the students evaluated by the three evaluators. On the other hand, Wilcoxon Rank Sum Test was used to determine the significant improvement between the students' pretest and posttest scores.

After the thorough analysis, the following results are discussed below:

1. Median Scores of the Pre-writing Test

Based on the given the data, the pre-writing median scores of the participating students in all six subgroups are 2 or verbally interpreted as Adequate.

Significantly, the overall pre-writing median scores of the students is 12 with a verbal interpretation of Adequate. The highest garnered score is 20 or Excellent while the lowest is 9 or Adequate.

2. Median Scores of the Post-writing Test

From the statistical data gathered, the participating students acquired a median of 2 or verbally interpreted as Adequate per subgroup in their post-writing test.

In addition, the overall post-writing median scores of the students is 17

with a verbal interpretation of Proficient. The highest garnered score is 22 or Excellent while the lowest is 11 or Adequate.

3. Significant Improvement in the Writing Scores of the Students After the JournPro Intervention

After the JournPro intervention, the students took their post-writing test. Based on the gathered statistical data, the results showed significant improvement from all subgroup indicators comparing their post-writing median scores to their pre-writing scores.

Comparing the writing performance of the students before and after the JournPro intervention, the value of w is -4.830 based on negative ranks. The value of p is 0.000. The result is significant at $p < .05$. Therefore, the result indicates a significant increase of median scores on the students' post-writing test.

DISCUSSION

JournPro or The Journal Project is the proposed pedagogical tool of the researcher during distance learning. The focal point of the researcher's problem concentrates on enhancing students' writing skills. It aimed to address the problem in answering subjective type of activities in their self-learning modules. Henceforth, the students could provide substantial answers with expound explanations because

of their habitual practice in writing on their conceptualized journals.

Students need consistent exposure to writing if teachers want them to write effectively. Of course, teachers should also note that supervision is still important in assuring their writing progress. With that being said, JournPro can be an effective facilitating tool as it is structured to aid the students in outlining their written works with provision of writing standards. Given their learning setup, the students were able to craft written outputs such as personal essays, poems, and short stories that prove that they can be both substantial and creative.

In a nutshell, the result of this action research proves that "practice makes perfect." Although the written outputs of the students were still not on a par with perfection, significant improvements from each writing subgroup are highly recognized. This shows that when students are given writing opportunities, with adequate guidance and concrete plan, they are going to cope with the self-learning situation and improve in their targeted skill.

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