

Healing assessment trauma: an experience of mutuality in Action Research

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Abstract: Learning assessment is a pedagogical reality such as in teaching professional education courses with preservice education students. Assessment problems like horrifying and boring test papers must be addressed because these cause trauma to learners. Using an Action Research Method, I subjected my test materials to democratic critiquing and enhancement process, taking-into account the experiences of my learners and the viewpoints of my colleagues as my study participants. Said materials were utilized as my pedagogical action to address student assessment animosity. The results made me discern that though the contents of my test papers were aligned with the learning outcomes defined by the Commission on Higher Education, they were merely words and sentences in monotone appearance and thus, not eye-catching. Consequently, I crafted a Holistic Written Assessment Guide (HWAG) ensuring in test paper construction the pedagogical values of multiple intelligences, learning taxonomies, grammar review necessity, proper coverage and level of difficulty sequencing and marking, and time-number of items balance. Utilizing this new form and substance of my learning assessment material and engaging with it turned out to be liberating thus mutual healing to me as a transformed purveyor of education, to my students as healthy collaborators, creators and ultimate beneficiaries of learning, and to educators in the global environment as inspirers of democratic, equitable, and lifelong education. With this mutuality, this paper potentially enables leaders of nations to engage in the transformation of the pedagogical landscape.

Keywords: Healing from assessment trauma, test material enhancement, experience of mutuality, action research

Sanando el trauma de la evaluación: una experiencia de mutualidad en la Investigación Acción

Resumen: La evaluación del aprendizaje es una realidad pedagógica en contextos tales como la enseñanza de cursos de educación profesional para estudiantes de magisterio. Es importante hacer algo en relación con problemas de evaluación tales como los tests horripilantes y aburridos porque generan traumas a las personas en proceso de aprendizaje. Utilizando una metodología de Investigación Acción, expuse mis tests a un proceso de crítica democrática y mejora, considerando las experiencias tanto de las personas en proceso de aprendizaje como de mis colegas. Dichos materiales constituyeron mi acción pedagógica para gestionar la animosidad de los estudiantes ante la evaluación. Los resultados me hicieron ver que, aunque los contenidos de mis tests estaban alineados con los resultados definidos por la Comisión de Educación Superior, eran simplemente palabras y frases de apariencia monótona y, en consecuencia, no llamaban la atención. Consecuentemente, preparé una Guía Holística para la Evaluación Escrita (GHEE), asegurándome que los tests tenían en cuenta los valores ped-

agógicos de la multiplicidad de inteligencias, las taxonomías de aprendizaje, la necesidad de revisar la gramática, cobertura y nivel de dificultad adecuadas de las secuencias y puntuaciones, y el equilibrio entre el tiempo disponible y el número de ítems. Utilizar estas nuevas forma y substancia de mi material de evaluación del aprendizaje y comprometerme con ello resultó ser un proceso liberador y mutuamente curativo, tanto para mi como educador, como para mis estudiantes y colaboradores, creadores y últimos beneficiarios del aprendizaje. También puede ser liberador para educadores en el contexto global que quieran ser inspiradores de una educación a lo largo de la vida democrática e igualitaria. Con esta mutualidad, este artículo podría, potencialmente, ayudar a los líderes de distintas naciones a comprometerse en la transformación del panorama educativo.

Palabras clave: curación del trauma de la evaluación, mejora de materiales para tests, experiencia de mutualidad, Investigación Acción

Rationale

Learning can be traumatic. Conversely, trauma hinders learning. Learners, either in micro or macro classrooms, often succumb to learning assessment trauma. Neither they nor their teachers can face it alone and not even the world can impose what the curative measures are. The healing action tried out in this study was mutually experienced by the learners, the teacher, and the educators in the global learning environment radiating with the sustainable development goals for education.

This study explores on what shapes the assessment trauma in learners and what mechanism is adaptable to address it. It appreciates the insights of the teacher and students being both instigators and beneficiaries of learning emerging from their assessment trauma and sharing healing experiences. Correspondingly, their healing is imperative to the attainment of the global targets for quality education. Hence, this study does not only determine assessment trauma as a classroom problem and create a curative response to reverse its devastating effect on learners, but also attempts to spread the healing experience instigated by democratic action in a minute educational classroom to a traumatic global educational environment.

In drawing out the viewpoints and insights emerging from experiencing the problematic learning assessment, from observing how it shatters learners, and acknowledging the healing effect of Holistic Written Assessment Guide undertaken as intervention, this study applied and consequently attested the value and usefulness of so-called first, second and third person dynamism of Action Research. In this venture, the dynamics of mutuality is articulated along the processes of diagnosing the problem, action planning, taking-action, evaluating the action, and specifying learning. These processes were undertaken by 37 students as direct study participants, the teacher as the researcher, and 3 invited co-teachers as process observers.

Diagnosing the Problem of Assessment Trauma

Teaching is healing!

- Paolo Freire, 1998; 1996

As a teacher of education professional courses, I used to merely prepare and implement learning assessment apart from evoking thoughts and values on relevant topics of the course. I never used to provide major attention on the monitoring and assessment aspects of teaching specifically assessing my own learning assessment. Since knowledge on assessment criteria and process are necessary factors of test performance (Rust, Price, & O'Donovan, 2003), I have always ensured that assessment orientation was undertaken prior to the examination proper. However, I thought doing test orientation was enough until I overheard two students complain severely about examination. Even if they were not in my class, I felt guilty for not having been keen about drawing out feedback about the test that I prepared and administered.

Disturbed by this imperfection, I was moved to explore related research findings. I then found that teachers should care about assessment materials as way to carry out the pedagogical role of motivating students (Wentzel, 1997). As purveyors of knowledge, I agree that teachers are expected to revisit every time the essence of the mission to care and create meaningful efforts towards changing the life of the learners (O'Connor, 2008) and be immersed into the healing function of education by being sensitive to the responsibility of identifying what is ailing in the learning environment and to democratically sort it out with the students (Freire, 1998).

One learning environment issue which caught my attention was the written examination. As I have observed in various occasions both in and outside classrooms, students were not excited about examinations. Instead of delight and elation with it, they had fears and discomforts. When I shared this observation with my colleagues, I heard similar predicaments. Thus, curiosity to investigate this phenomenon was triggered.

As I explored the phenomenon, I conversed with students and imparted queries related to their experience of examination anxiety. Consequently, I heard various and even worse remarks.

Basta magpadulong na gani ang exam schedule, ma-stress gyud ko. Dili gyud ko makatulog og mayo. Tapos kung makamata sa tungang gabii, maglisud ko tulog og balik tungod kay maglagot kay exam na pud. Mahadlok ko mabagsak ko kay unsa na lang isulti sa uban... sa akong mga parents. Murag mangurug ko maghuna-huna.

When the schedule of the examination is approaching, I feel stressed. I can't sleep well. If I wake up in the middle of the night, I find it hard to go back to sleep because I hate that it's examination time again. I am afraid to fail for what would others say... especially my parents. I tremble just thinking about it.

Many students disliked, hated, and were care-free about examination. They felt that they were "obliged" to take examination for course completion evidence and tuition fee collection purposes. They commented that given an option, they would not engage in written examination.

Ako wala koy labot anang exam oy. Basta, dili ko excited ana nga butang. Take-take lang ko para lang gud makahuman kog eskwela. Kung naa pa lay laing eskwelahan nga walay exam-exam didto gyud ko moeskwela. Papilion ko sa mag exam or maghimo project, didto na lang ko sa project kay sa maghawoy imong kamot sinulat ug makaluya sigi huna-huna. Ang isa ka oras murag isa na katuig.

I don't care about exam. Honestly, I'm not excited about it. I just engage with it in order to earn a degree. If only there is a school with no exams, I would enroll there. If given the chance to choose between taking exam or making a

project, I opt with the latter rather than getting my hands exhausted by writing and my mind drained. One-hour exam is like a one whole year undertaking.

When I delved into the core of this issue, I discovered that students perceived examination as scary because they were driven by the fears of being judged especially on their intellectual performance, of foreseeing possible negative results, of the possibility of being embarrassed and wasting money, and of starting from scratch if the test turned out to be unfavorable. For them, examination is tantamount to pressure of meeting the expectations of others, and to the obligation to explain the reason for failing. It is identical to exasperation especially with the long, extensive and time demanding actual assessment activity where they need to endure cramping hands for writing too much, and of sweating a lot for recalling and analyzing the possible answers. It is perceived as difficult thus not entertaining, but it entails a demanding nerve-wrecking preparation. It is a memory-squeezing exercise that is mentally draining, and it is associated with the dislikable teacher, thus hard to take.

Among the reasons that the students revealed for hating the examination was the boring and horrible test paper. For them, it is a static and rigid material causing them a vomiting-like feeling. They feel that it leads to an “all work, no play” scenario that often results to low exam performance. One student recalled...

Giluod na gyud ko anang test papers. 18 years na ko nag-agwanta ana since grade 1. Kung pwede pa lang mograduate na ko ugma para makalikay na ko ani nga butang. Pahirap. I don't find it nga makalipay nga himuon. Mao nga kabalo ko kini ang hinungdan nga dili mayo akong grado.

I'm sick of test papers. I have been trying to survive it for 18 years since I was in first grade. If I can only graduate tomorrow right away to get rid of it. It's a burden. I don't find it pleasurable to engage in. I know it's the reason of my unfavorable academic performance.

This reminded me of the assertion that test items are considered a factor in test performance (Teasdale & Owen, 2005) and that test paper anxiety exerts a significant stable and negative impact on academic performance measures (Cassady & Johnson, 2002).

These negative descriptions of test papers are like a double-edged sword that hit my conscience and pierced my inner vulnerability. The questions on how my students regard and feel about my test papers, and how I can possibly help avert the unfavorable views and sentiments of the learners about test papers continued to haunt my values as a person and my vows as a teacher. Carrying these loads on my shoulders, I began to suspect that other students not in my class are undergoing similar “test paper trauma”. It is a classroom reality that is likewise experienced on a global scale that instigates the United Nations to continuously aim and toil for equitable education and lifelong learning opportunities for all (SDG, U., 2019). Any unhealthy classroom practice that strips the students of meaningful learning opposes the UN 2030 agenda of respect for human rights and dignity, and justice and equality (Desa, 2016). Such target can also be attained through the establishment of scientific community and building knowledge-based societies (Colglazier, 2015). In short, the student assessment predicament, my agitated teaching profession, and the global sustainable development concern of nations on education, made me pursue my Action Research from diagnosing the root causes of traumatic learning assessment as a disease in education up to figuring out an appropriate antidote to heal the nauseated individuals in my own learning environment, and in every nation as a macro classroom.

Action Planning in Exploring Democratic Inquiry

Democratic inquiry improves practice.
- Frabutt et al., 2008

I believe that teaching is indeed healing – a principle that can be realized through democratic process. Hence, as a teacher confronted with a potential unhealthy condition in an examination environment, I wanted to do something in order to eradicate if not lessen the learners' animosity on test papers. I discussed with my colleagues the possible mechanisms in achieving this goal. From among the various suggestions I received, I liked the idea of improving my test papers based on the experiences and suggestions of the people I engaged with during examination. I had an inkling that engaging in an improved test material would turn out to be a therapeutic activity to mend a devastated learner. Thus, I was enticed to make a diagnosis right within my own classroom as my laboratory, to use my own test papers as my apparatus, and to engage my own students and colleagues as my samples (study participants).

In realizing this, I found Action Research as the most appropriate method to use as it addresses a practical problem in the workplace, tries out a strategy, engages colleagues and clients as important sources of information, counts in one's own learning emerging from one's own experience of implementing the strategy, and improves work climate by modifying work strategy (Stringer, 2008). I became eager to engage in and find how action research could help me inquire assessment related problems encountered in my classroom, describe realizations on its connections with the teaching and learning performance, and create and explain possible solutions. I was convinced it involves and brings excitements and joys among those involved being a living research theory (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006). Its principles radiate the magnitude of the essence of change, reflection, participation, inclusivity, sharing, understanding, repetition, and the sense of practice and community (Stringer, 2004). Finally, by teaching education students, I realized how important doing Action Research is in the teacher education program (Hine, 2013).

Seeing the appropriateness of such method, I went through the process of diagnosing the problem, action planning, taking action, evaluating, and specifying learning as basic steps of Action Research (O'Brien, 1998). I sought answers to the following questions from the study participants and process observers: What are the current manifestations of assessment trauma among students? What are the feedbacks of my students and colleagues about my assessment material? What are their suggestions to enable them to like, admire, and enjoy my assessment material? What can be the new essence (substance and form) of my assessment material based on their suggestions? These were asked to evoke comments on the test paper such as its appearance, construction, organization and others.

I read relevant sources and interviewed students. In the planning, I asked pieces of advice on how to evoke the feedbacks of the learners. I prepared my assessment material the usual way which later I subjected to critiquing. I utilized purposive sampling particularly convenient sampling (Marshall, 1996) because after all I had my class as my captured study participants, and my colleagues and myself as process observers and secondary participants. With purposive sampling (Creswell & Poth, 2016), I was able to choose the group, the individuals within it, and their location as all important aspects in understanding the study with its major and principal events and occurrence.

In the analysis of the information, I evoked the experiences via experiential-theoretic transition model (Piantanida & Garman, 2009) integrated with the use of lateral-vertical analysis technique. Thus, my entire class, my selected colleagues and I went through four phases of concrete learning, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active trying out of the material. In writing the result, I followed the *emic* style (Patton, 2002) of reflection. I entered-into the world and the culture of the owners of the experience.

While analyzing and writing of the thoughts and feelings about the assessment materials and of the experience of the learners, I also encountered my self. I realized my inner vulnerabilities. I wanted focus on the world of the learners. However, it was the idea on *authenticity of the first-person practice* in Action Research (Coghlan, 2008) which gave me the courage to spontaneously reveal also my own story of healing. I viewed myself not as something at a distance from the subject matter being explored to but one within. I was convinced that if I truly figure out my difficulties in accepting the criticisms of my learners and the healing I encountered from within, then I would fully grasp the struggles of my learners and then appreciate deeply the value of the sustainable development goals of the United Nations for quality education.

Moreover, in this Action Research, I followed the trustworthiness requirement in qualitative research namely credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Fenton & Mazuwelics, 2008). I ensured credibility through the conduct of simultaneous small group and series interviews in order that prior shared viewpoints and standpoints are confirmed with the emerging ones. I further ensured it by giving adequate time and careful interactions with the study participants, detailed descriptions of the learning environment, and the triangulation of the data shared by the different FGDs. In terms of ensuring transferability, first I came up with detailed explanation of the comments and suggestions of my study participants using the most appropriate words and more understandable thoughts, views and emotions.

In terms of adhering to dependability, I conveyed the important details of the information shared vis-à-vis existing concepts, theories and principles that I had encountered in my readings of the literatures and research findings. Furthermore, I gave my strong confidence in the integrity, sincerity and honesty of my study participants whom I intentionally made part of obtaining the general experience of utilizing my test materials. Their contribution was not shaded by interest to gain higher marks because it was made clear from the start of the research that viewpoints would not be recompensed. Lastly, I ensured confirmability by way of keeping the original transcripts of those reported observations and discussed feedbacks during the focus group discussions, those recorded in the journals of my colleagues and mine during observations, and those emerging from the individual interviews. I also audit trails to ensure that the study is rigorously undertaken and accomplished (Wolf, 2003).

Finally, I upheld ethical actions by undertaking free prior informed consent and allowing my students and co-teachers to use the vernacular, ensured them of confidentiality such that their names do not appear in the manuscript. I apportioned in the consent form a space where the study participants affixed their signatures indicating their acceptance of the agreement (Creswell, 1998).

Taking action to Unearth Experiences Linked to Assessment Trauma

*Participation is a freedom of expression.
- Flanders, 2013*

After reflecting on various possibilities and planning how to gather the information needed, I then took the actual action. I kept in mind that participant observation is a vigorous data collection method (Kawulich, 2005) especially in qualitative type of research (Patton, 1990) with which Action Research is strongly identified (Stringer, 2008). Being aware of this, I was confident to gather relevant information through observation technique. I applied such technique even prior to the examination proper when I observed the students' reactions especially every time that I reminded them of the test schedule, contents, coverage, and the type.

My students and the test paper as both parts of the learning environment were the sources of data and object of the study. After all, Action Research as a value-driven transformative process aims to effect change within an environment with the active observation and involvement of the researcher (Cunningham, 2008).

When the examination time came, the students arrived seemingly in various dispositions. As I informed them ahead, the teachers I invited to sit in were welcomed in the class. They helped me observe the learning environment such as the distribution and retrieval of the test papers. We observed the students, watched and scrutinized their body language and their facial expressions. In order to ensure proper and accurate recollection of observed information, each of us kept a personal journal.

After the test, I asked my students if they had noticed anything about the test materials including the construction of the test items both format and substance. Few of them raised hands, others uttered few remarks. Thus, we agreed together that in the following class session, we would discuss their observations about the test paper. On the other hand, I requested my colleagues who sat in the class to share their observations both the actions and the content of the test papers. I emphasized to them that we needed to allow ourselves to be drawn into the meaning of every text in relation with the appearance of the whole material. I also critically reviewed the material and added my findings in my journal.

When the next class meeting came, I organized the students into three groups. One had males, and two others had females and mixed members. I posted my research guide questions on the board, projected the test paper on screen, and provided the opportunity for the students to critique and discuss. I went around, observed and wrote descriptions of their reactions which I inserted in my journal. After the FGD, I requested each group to report their feedbacks in the plenary using any language they felt comfortable with. We interacted and unified on the points raised and presented. After the activity, I collected the written reports from students and the journals from my colleagues. The succeeding days turned out to be fruitful interactions between me and each of my colleagues. I took separate notes of the feedback I gathered from them.

Evaluating the Encounter with the Assessment Material

Leadership is an outcome of humility
- Morris, Brotheridge and Urbanski, 2005

I remembered how my students reacted on the test papers. I admit that I felt uncomfortable with those reactions. During group reporting I was knocked by sarcasm. I noticed some who made faces and insulting smiles. Some students looked at each other as if confirming the negativities of the test materials they observed that corroborated with what were articulated by the presenters. There were terms uttered to describe their thoughts that were not gentle to my hearing.

I was truly hurt when I heard that aside from dis-alignment of the content and items to learning outcomes, my students saw nothing in my test papers except words, paper, sentences, questions – things which are typical of any test papers they encountered in exam after exam. In short, there was nothing new and exciting about my test papers. One student openly reacted after the group presentation saying that...

Wala gyud koy napanasin sa test paper gawas nga papel sya nga nay mga pangutana. Kana lang. Mao lang man gyud ni ang makita sa test paper di ba? Sukad grade one pa ko mao ni gyud ni akong makita, wa nay lain – questions, questions, questions. Puro questions.

I did not notice anything in the test paper except that it's a paper material containing questions. That's it. This is what a test paper is, right? Since I was in grade one, this is what I see – questions, questions, questions. Nothing else.

Another student spoke in relation to such comment and laughed outed very loud. She said...

Gawas sa questions, naa koy nakita... nay duha ka colors, itum ug puti. Puti ang papel ug itum, ang ink.

Aside from questions, I saw something... there are two colors, black and white. The paper is white, and the ink is black.

One of the things spoken out by one presenter was that majority of the items in the test paper was merely at remembering level and some items were grammatically defective. While the idea was being shared, I overheard another one from the seat who conveyed softly saying...

Bitaw tama gyud. Halos tanan items makasakit og ulo kay murag ginapuga imong utok sa pag huna-huna ug pag-remember sa daghan kayo nga mga lessons. Makaluya gyud ang test oy.

That's right. Almost all items trigger headache because it's like your brain is squeezed a lot in order to recall the many lessons. The test is draining.

All the rest of the common ideas presented by the different groups were about the test coverage, organization of items, markings according to level of difficulty, and the practicality to finish all items on time. They shared that the test paper included topics that were not discussed in the class in the previous weeks before the examination was taken up, and some very difficult items were presented ahead which ate up so much time of their time before they proceeded to the simpler questions. They also highlighted that easy and difficult items were unfairly assigned with equal marks, and there were too many items vis-à-vis allotted time for them to fully accomplish the test.

The succeeding moment became more shameful. I read texts flashed on the Powerpoint slides almost common to all presenters regarding ideas about learners' differences, level of difficulty of the questions, assigning marks, grammar problem, and request to consider the length of time. One student specifically said...

Dili man ta pareho tanan og pamaagi ug interest sa pag-learn di ba? Dapat pud unta ni hatagan og pagtagad sa exam. Mao daghan ang dili makahuman sa pag-answer. Maabtan na lang sa time. Mubo pud ang oras tapos nay mga pangutana nga dili dayon masabtan kay mali ang grammar.

Not all have the same way and interest in learning, right? This concern must also be considered in the exam. That is why many cannot finish answering the test. They are caught up by time. The time limit provided for the test is too short then there are questions so difficult to decipher because of grammar problem.

Another one looked at me and had this said ...

Sir, mas mayo unta kung gamay-gamayan ang gidaghanon sa items. Timbangan gyud kung matubag ba namo ang mga pangutana sulod sa gihatag nga time. Basin gibase nimo sa imong kakayahanan Sir kay master na man ka. Naa pa gyuy naapil nga questions pero dili namo mahinumduman kanus-a nato ni na-discuss sa klase.

Sir, it might be good if you reduce the number of items. Weigh it over whether the test is doable in a given time. You might have just based it from your level being knowledgeable of the topic. Additionally, there are included questions which we could hardly remember the occasion when they were tackled in the class.

My students prompted me that I should have considered diversity of their individual learning styles and general thinking capability as a class when preparing the test items. They suggested that test items should be in different degree of difficulty and organized from easy to difficult level. They pointed out that grammar problem should have been avoided or at least lessened if I asked the assistance of grammar experts. They demanded that undiscussed subject matter should be excluded, and that those less tackled get fewer number of items than those discussed more and longer. They proposed that difficult questions would be given higher marks. Finally, they hoped that number of items must just be doable within the examination period.

Hearing all those remarks made me realize how low was my interest to enhance my skills in assessment vis-à-vis students' needs. I confess that in the past, I assessed students for the sake of complying with the requirements of my job as a teacher. I assessed them only because I needed to measure their intellect vis-à-vis the subject matter but never their affection on assessment per se. I assessed them to see their improvement but never about how I could ever improve myself in advancing their level of learnings both in terms of capability and motivation. I assessed them without thinking of the impact of my assessment on their self-confidence. Those remarks I paid attention to also made me size up my capacity to accept criticism and suggestion as a person, and my willingness to change my practices as a teacher. Above this, I was reminded of multiple intelligences and of Bloom's taxonomy modified and asserted by Anderson and Krathwohl (Wilson, 2016). Indeed, the six cognitive taxonomies were topics we discussed in the course, yet I failed to apply them in my assessment materials. Further, I was drawn back to the values of humility to submit a work for peer review and of justice to reward abilities to perform harder tasks. I also recalled an article stating that the human brain tends to be attentive actively only for 45 minutes. Thereafter, it needs rest to regain concentration strength. The amount of time an individual can remain focused on a task like answering a test without becoming distracted is referred to as attention span. Students who extend beyond their attention span tend to commit more errors, create less, and perform low. Recently, researchers found that the average attention span of American learners dropped to 20, 10 and even 5 minutes (Kohn, 2014). Low attention span is caused by too much exposure to modern technologies (Postman, 2011). The dropping of attention can be true to countries like the Philippines since new millennium learners have something in common – exposure to technologies (Pedró, 2006).

After all the deliberations, I went home with a blissful heart. I brought with me the sincerities of my students, the remarks which I considered relevant information that I needed,

and the appreciation of some that the test paper at least had elicited efforts to think about and recall the lessons. I felt then that I (as teacher) enhanced the leadership in me sculpted by humility – something which is a key to success particularly in making my followers (the students) admire, respect and support, and keep on (Eragula, 2015). I was also humbled that in a way, my class and I experienced the mutuality to start a little action, like a mustard seed creating great wonders in the fulfillment of global concern for quality education.

Specifying Learning out of the Experience

*Continual learning is reassuring.
- Mankowitz et al, 2018)*

Going back to the time before the examination day, it seemed to me that nobody was interested in how the actual test would be undertaken and how the test papers would look like. I noticed that the students were cold about it. During the examination proper, I saw frowning faces and uneasy body movements such as scratching of hair, pulling of shirts, looking around and outside the windows. There were faces that were emotionless and uncaring. Most conveyed confusions, frustrations, and exasperation.

During the focus group discussions, while looking into and extracting the feedback about the test papers, I noticed that a lot of my students expressed excitement for being part of the process and for sharing their thoughts and critiques. They were very happy discussing within their respective groups. During the reporting, they confirmed their experiences and reactions with the viewpoints that were raised by their group members and even by those from others. One said...

Lipay kaayo ko. I don't know sa uban. Kay nahatagan ko og chance nga mahimo kong kabahin sa interest ni sir sa pag-improve sa iyang test paper. Feeling nako naay bili akong kaugalingon.

I am very happy. I don't know about the others. This is because I was given the chance to become part of sir's interest in improving his test paper. I feel that I have value as a person.

In undergoing the process, I felt happy observing my students but also anxious about their feedbacks. Though feedbacks were focused on my test papers yet somehow, they were also pointed at my limitations as a teacher. Nevertheless, I tried to be composed. I had prepared myself for that moment and I was convinced that criticism was good for my own improvement and development as an education practitioner. Most importantly, I learned that test papers can instigate trauma among students. And if teachers like me continue to be blind on this mistake, the trauma worsens. I confess, my students have opened my eyes by fairly and candidly sharing their thoughts, feelings, and suggestions for my pedagogical action.

Subsequently, I improved my test paper. I kept the value of alignment with the learning outcomes, however I made it already based on multiple intelligences principle where types of questions were spread to attract the musical-rhythmic, visual-spatial, verbal-linguistic, and logical-mathematical inclined and the bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic types of learners. For instance, I already added various drawings, caricatures, logical illustrations, abstract symbols, and pictures in some test items. I applied topic integration strategy where I contextualized certain topics on the course "Child and Adolescent

Development” with nature, songs and music, physical movements, and the value of relationship with self and others.

In addition, I already seriously applied in my test materials the principles of table of specification (TOS). It means that questions are constructed in different levels of taxonomy namely, remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating. I arranged them from easy to thought-stimulating level. I also provided specific points corresponding with the degree of difficulty of each question. Moreover, I already sought the assistance of grammar experts. I requested colleagues in the field of Communication Arts and Linguistics to go over every test item. I enjoyed listening to their remarks after the review because at the same time I was expanding a lot my horizon on grammar and language construction.

Furthermore, I double-checked the test items. I controlled the number of items vis-à-vis the bulk of topics discussed and balanced this with length of time available. I came up with less number but quality test items. For instance, in the prelim examination, from one hundred items in a span of one hour as previously practiced, I reduced the items to only twenty-five.

In short, I considered the important pedagogical values in the revision and improvement of the test materials namely, multiple intelligences, learning taxonomies, grammar reviews, markings corresponding to degree of difficulty, proper coverage, and balancing of time and number of items. Putting all these pedagogical values together prompted me to conceptualize an examination paper template which I called Holistic Written Assessment Guide (HWAG).

Illustration 1: Guide in allocating the type of test items

Holistic Written Assessment Guide						
The Cognitive Process Dimensions						
The Knowledge dimensions	Level 1 <i>Remember</i>	Level 2 <i>Understand</i>	Level 3 <i>Apply</i>	Level 4 <i>Analyze</i>	Level 5 <i>Evaluate</i>	Level 6 <i>Create</i>
Rem -1 mark	1	2	1	1	2	3
Und -2 marks	2	2	3	3	2	1
App - 3 marks	2	1	3	1	1	1
Ana - 3 marks	2	1	3	1	1	1
Eval -4 marks	1	1	2	2	1	1
Creat- 5 marks	1	1	2	2	1	1

1. Apply the principle of multiple intelligences
2. Ensure true application of TOS
3. Seek assistance of grammar expert
4. Double check the items
5. Ensure topic-number of item distribution
6. Provide appropriate mark per item
7. Construct less but quality test items

HWAG is a template that guides the arrangement of test questions drafted and assigned with specific corresponding score depending on level of complexity and difficulty. It values the diversity of learners' intelligence and their learning types. It makes it easy for me to plot the different type of items to measure the student learning.

In addition, I have developed the simple mathematical formula to determine how many items are to be allocated for specific topics tackled in the class. It is the number of hours taught divided by the total number of hours of all the topics covered; and the quotient is multiplied to the number of target items. The target total number of items depends on the number of total

hours covered. Since the institution I was in requires a total of 80 hours coverage for the whole term and a sixty-minute examination thereafter with a total of one hundred test items, I used such ratio in determining how many items I would need to prepare within a duration specified.

Illustration 2: Formula on deriving the number of test item

Formula: $Ti : Hd : At$		
Symbol	Meaning	University Standard for Final Exam
Ti	total item	Not less than 100 items
Hd	number of hours covered	Not less than 80 hours
At	allotted time for the test	Not less than 60 minutes
n	number items to be prepared	(have to be determined)
x	Amount of time for the test	(have to be determined)

Example: Prelim exam (what must be the total number of items and time)
Given: the number of hours covered is 20

Step 1: (finding the items)	Step 2: (Finding the exam time)
$100 : 80 = n : 20$ $80n = 2,000$ $80n / 80 = 2,000 / 80$ $n = 25 \text{ items}$	$100 : 60 = 25 : x$ $100x = 1,500$ $100x / 100 = 1,500 / 100$ $x = 15 \text{ minutes}$

I realized that undergoing the test revision and improvement process of my test papers has strengthened my compassion for learners and my passion for teaching. Seeing the beauty of the process that we have undergone together as well as its corresponding outcomes have motivated me to re-examine every new and modified test materials. Perfection might not be achievable but chasing perfection is certainly doable and enjoyable – bringing about excellence in me as a practitioner and in my students as my pedagogical equals. Living out this culture enables myself to contribute something to the institutional continual improvement. After all, I am convinced that teachers must be part of the so-called reflective institution (Biggs, 2001).

As my students opened my eyes, mutually we were cured from the psychological burden of test trauma. I was informed that the encounter of my students with my new test papers turned out to be an inspiring fulfilment for them. In the succeeding class sessions, it was already them who excitingly reminded me of the examination timetable. Unlike before, I was the one who kept reminding them to study hard every time examination period was approaching. I remember an instance I came across few of my students at the lobby, one asked which was affirmed by others said...

Sir, maghatag na ka daan og exam ugma? Excited na gud mi mo-take sir – ginaabangan gyud namo atong test kay malipay mi.

Sir, are you going to administer the test ahead tomorrow? We are already very excited to take it sir – we always look forward to it as it makes us happy.

After our short conversations, I walked with a cheerful heart. The positive gestures that my students used manifested a restored learning interest once shattered by unhealthy test materials.

This time, I already saw smiles in their faces while taking the test. This change in the classroom atmosphere from negativity to alacrity during examination awakened my enthusiasm to look forward to examination days. I was elated with the revelation of many who felt excited to see the appearance and read the contents of my test papers. After the examination activity, majority wanted to bring home copies of the test papers – behaviors which were non-existent in my examination environment prior to this research.

Sir, pwede ba nga dili na iuli ang test paper, ang filled-out answer sheets na lang among iuli? Amoon na lang ning test paper, pwede?

Sir, is it okay not to return anymore the test paper, only the filled-out answer sheets? We can bring home the test paper, can't we?

Above all these, I noticed how the learning performance of my students increased in the succeeding grading periods and I received priceless appreciations. One student said...

Sure ko nga ang pagtaas sa akong grado tungod gyud sa naunsa ko pagka-attract sa lahi nga appearance sa test paper ug sa ka-klaro sa mga questions. Kung sa una ma-tense ko samtang nag take sa exam kay nag apas ko sa oras, sa karun kay though paspas akong utok nga naga huna-huna sa answers pero naga enjoy ko. Murag, kulangan pa ko kay gusto pa ko mo-answer ug naa pa koy extra nga time gamay. Sa una, bug-at kaayo ang feeling inig gawas sa classroom after sa exam. Pero karun gaan kaayo ang feeling. Naga-discuss pa mi sa akong mga classmates sa among nakita ug nabasa sa test paper. Usually after sa test matulog dayon ko tungod sa kakapoy. Salamat gyud sir, dili na ko stressed before ug during sa exam, ug dili na pud ko drained pagkahuman.

I am sure that the increase of my grade was also influenced by how I was attracted by the unique appearance of the test paper and the clarity of the questions. If before I felt tense while taking the test because I was catching up the time, however this time although my mind still intensely thinking of the answers but at the same time I was enjoying. Somehow, I felt wanting to answer more because I still have little time left. Before, the feeling was so heavy getting out of the room after the test. But now the feeling is so light. My classmates and I still discussed what we saw and read in the test paper. Usually after the test I slept right away because of exhaustion. Thank you, sir, I don't feel stressed before and during the examination, and I don't feel drained after.

Seeing this mutuality transpired, I contemplated that beyond my responsibility of making teaching-learning alive, enjoyable and meaningful, I have a hidden task as a teacher to animate justice, mutual respect, and democracy within everyone in the micro-society I am working in. This idea adds to my views of how Action Research is as a tool to make this task happen. Astoundingly, our mutuality transcends from our level. One student optimistically articulated his heart out...

Kini nga kalipay tungod sa kabag-ohan nga atong nasinati motakud gyud ni sa uban ug sa umaabot nga panahon ky mahimo man ta mga teachers puhon. Magtudlo ta nga wala nay bagahe sa dala-dala. Kita ang magdala sa mayo nga edukasyon – something nga makat-onan sa uban gikan sa ato hangtud nga mo-spread ni hinay-hinay sa bigger society, sa world.

This joy in us caused by healing that we experienced will contaminate others and in the next generations because we will become teachers someday. We teach without that baggage on our shoulder. We are catalyst of good education – something that can be learned by others from us spreading slowly to the bigger society, the world.

When I recalled, I saw that my entire experience of doing this Action Research was not easy. I painstakingly dared the risk of possibly causing demise by inadvertently undergoing an erroneous method of treatment to test paper anxiety. I was internally devastated when I had to swallow my pride amidst dreadful criticisms. Nevertheless, I redeemed myself upon seeing how the patients inside my own classroom have recuperated from assessment trauma and regained the courage and enthusiasm to engage in the examination process. They also reversed their negativity against test papers. The entire event was a grueling experience, but its fruits contributed to the establishment of a happy learning environment in my classroom at long last.

Moreover, the feedbacks of my students have fueled my dynamism in the teaching profession, and their recovery and healing became my consolation and inspiration. While I helped cure the test paper anxiety disease of my students through Action Research therapy, I was also healed as a teacher. The whole experience had opened my eyes and made me a new educator, a new person. I was healed from being oblivious and uncaring to being observant and sensitive to learner needs; from being carefree about test papers to being receptive to learner criticisms. I became eager to enhance not just the 'Child and Adolescent Development' test papers but also of all the courses I am handling.

I was relieved from the symptoms of insensitivity on the assessment trauma of my learners. My values and interest in improving learning through a healthy assessment was improved. Now I am resounding the healing memories in my heart because the students made me different from who I was. I avow that teaching and researching are inseparable, and both heal not just the learners, but more importantly, the teacher. I am convinced that when teachers study the pedagogical actions that they undertake in their learning environment, they will turn disaster into bliss – an opportunity that alter the learning from demotivation to passion. In this study, I enhanced my assessment practice and materials from mediocrity to quality. And in such action, at the very least, I felt that I helped heal the examination trauma of the learners.

Holding firmly on the aphorism of doing Action Research and learning from the results of this study, I became more mindful of the teacher's responsibility to enhance test materials. The lessons of this research taught me a lot of implications for my pedagogical practice such as promoting action research, and utilization of Holistic Written Assessment Guide (HWAG). I am now advocating policy formulation following the mathematical formula in determining total numbers of test items and amount of time as my simple way of paying back the generousities of my students and colleagues in mending examination trauma.

Apart from my encounter with the transformative healing experience of my learners, I also felt confident that the learning of the teachers influenced by this study is compelling and 'contagious'. Such marvel leads eventually to the termination of the legacy of assessment trauma through the teachers and student-teachers as my study participants who may become the next generation of enlightened educators confronting education crisis.

The global learning crisis due to the pandemic has created a fragile learning environment. In confronting this crisis, this research nobly finds a way to help eradicate assessment trauma as a form of violence that obstructs sustainable quality learning for all, and thus a threat to sustainable development defined and aimed by the United Nations (Lee, Kjaerulf, Turner, Cohen, Donnelly, Muggah, and Gilligan, 2016). Humbly, the Holistic Written Assessment Guide as outcome of this study can be an innovative tool applicable and accessible either in a digital or non-digital learning setting. Using such framework helps in the building trauma-free learning climate as a factor in the attainment of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goal for inclusive and equitable education, and lifelong learning opportunities for all (Innovative tools...Ret 2022). The UN 2030 agenda are geared towards a poverty and discrimination-free world, where respect for human rights and dignity and the rule of law, justice, and equality is vibrant (Desa, 2016). Such agenda asserts the built-in call for quality education where everyone is free from traumatic educational processes. This agenda calls for tomorrow's dependable and upright educators as leaders in every nation, blossomed from the small seed of today's assessment trauma-free classroom.

Finally, noticing the interconnectedness of my own healing as the teacher moved by the predicaments of my learners, the healing of my students infected by unhealthy learning

assessment, and conceivably the transformation of education in the global context caused by traumatic learning environment, I was prompted with the first–second–third person traces of dynamism in Action Research (Gearty and Coghlan, 2018). This study looks at pedagogical healing from three distinct but linked up lenses namely, that of the teacher, the learner, and the educators of the world. With this, I learned to deeply value the essence of mutuality.

Realizations

Out of the modest desire and attempt of this study to figure out the healing of students from learning assessment trauma, other actors of the pedagogical pursuit: the teacher and the educators in every nation are equally drawn into and benefited from the liberating process. The integrality and substantiality of the first-second-third person dynamism is truly avowed. The learning emerging from the experiential experimentation undertaken by researchers and policy makers through Action Research transformations paradigm (Larrea, Bradbury, & Barandiaran, 2021) was recognized and valued in the healing journey with my students. Similarly, our entire Action Research endeavor bears out the mutuality articulated in various ways such as mutuality in awareness of being part of a collaborative task, of emotion that triggers intense dialogue, of inquiry directed towards a common goal of healing from unhealthy educational task, of recognition of individual nuances and aspirations, and mutuality in relational transformation as effect of the action.

The mutuality of the voices of the learners, teacher, and educators in every nation was instigated by this Action Research. Humbly, the whole process subtly turned out to be a moment of listening to our diverse inner selves, however, in converging together, we embraced our vulnerabilities and addressed our woundedness as pedagogical components. Likewise, we advocate for the healing of the world injured with a traumatic and enslaving kind of education.

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