

# Appendix 1

## KEEPING A LEARNING JOURNAL

A learning journal is a record of your efforts to puzzle through events, thoughts and feelings about a particular aspect of life close to when these events take place. It reflects your own effort to capture your learning as it unfolds over time. It can record anything and in any way in relation to the issues under consideration. There are many reasons for keeping a journal. You may want to capture an experience before you forget it, to explore your feelings or to make sense of what you are puzzling over. Most times you write for yourself; other times you are required to write for others such as when prescribed in a course.

With respect to the context where journal keeping is prescribed in a course, journal writing is intimately linked to learning through how it enhances reflection and reflective practice. Reflection is the means by which experience is turned into learning through exploring experiences so as to learn from them. Writing a learning journal means puzzling through what is happening at work and in your life. A learning journal is like a diary but it is oriented towards learning and thus towards deliberative thought and analysis related to practice, and so it is a vehicle for reflection. In terms of the learning formula  $L = P + Q$ , your journal is your personal record of how your learning ( $L$ ) is emerging from your subjecting espoused theory ( $P$ ) to questioning ( $Q$ ) from your experience. It is expected that your journal is private and confidential, for your eyes only, though in a course setting your supervisor may read it and is expected to keep its contents confidential. The Reflective Pauses dotted throughout the chapters are another source of journal entries.

There are several purposes of keeping a learning journal. The main purpose is to deepen the quality of your learning through critical thinking and by developing a questioning attitude. Accordingly, a second purpose is to enable you to understand and increase participation and ownership of your own learning process, rather than being dependent on a textbook or a lecture. Essentially a journal captures

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- 1 what took place on a particular occasion (what you and others said and did)
- 2 what you thought and felt about what happened and probably didn't say at the time
- 3 what your reflection is on both of the above.

In terms of the *general empirical method* introduced in Chapter 2, what a learning journal seeks to capture is how you try to:

- be *attentive* to what is going on around you
- be *intelligent* in your understanding
- be *reasonable* in your judgements
- be *responsible* for your actions.

While journals may be highly structured or unstructured, in the context of keeping a learning journal in a course, it is useful to have some structure so as to keep track of your learning and so that your lecturer may be able to evaluate it. A useful format might be:

- 1 Recount an incident - who said and did what, what you thought and felt.
- 2 What questions arise for you from that incident?
- 3 What insights have you into that incident? About the situation? About you?
- 4 Can you test or have you tested those insights? Question your own thinking.
- 5 Then/now what?

It is important that journal entries are linked to one another so that your reflection on a particular incident finds echoes in your reflection on other and later incidents, where you might show how you learned from an earlier incident or that you haven't and how that sets up a further question and inquiry. A learning journal maps reflection over time as well as at a particular time, hence dating your entries enables you to view developments over time.