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Visual Reflection

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Visual Reflection

Reflective practice is a well-established and integral part of teacher training programmes. This action research project investigated the effectiveness of a visual form of reflection by PGCE students training to be Art and Design teachers in the post-compulsory sector.

Methodology:
Questionnaires established student opinion prior to the visual reflection exercise. Emerging themes at this stage were a preference for visual recording, together with an awareness that a 'visual' expression of learning could be open to interpretation if not accompanied by explanation.

After creating the 'collaged' reflections, students explained their symbolism and representation of ideas to the whole group. This was captured on video and followed by further questionnaires and focus groups which explored the student experience in the form of quantitative data. A typical comment was: “This was a good experience for me, as it used a language which I am comfortable with - visual language”

It was hoped that a collaged reflection would offer a non text-based tool to convey information and a medium through which feelings and ideas could be expressed. A way for the trainee teachers to capture the ‘ideas swirling around in their heads’.

Conclusions...
Visual reflection offered an alternative and creative way for students to consider their learning and development. The exercise was a successful attempt to move beyond ‘ritualistic reflection’, wherein reflection provides little more than spurious ‘evidence’ of reflection in order to meet the ‘requirement to reflect’ (Ash and Moore 2002: 5). The experience may also be described as an effective example of ‘intra-professional verbalised reflection’ (ibid 2002: 8) - reflection carried out in the company of others in the same ‘community of practice’. As a result, it is recommended to other educators looking for ways to develop their learners’ reflective thinking and practice.