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<th>Teaching and Professional Fellowship Report 2004/5: Structured vivas as accommodated assessment for dyslexic students</th>
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Presenting 'The Viva', A Courageous Learning Activity Supported By Pedagogically Sound Research

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Theme 5: Accountability (also refers to Theme 2 Futures and Theme 6 E-Futures)

Conceptual Paper
(Full length 3000 words - 45 mins)

Objectives

• To locate and illustrate the space for 'accommodated' assessment within Art and Design pedagogy

• To promote 'real' changes to assessment practice by presenting research findings from my Teaching and Learning Fellowship at University of the Arts London

• To encourage fellow professionals to respond enthusiastically to the challenges of disability legislation by utilising the notion of 'risk' in creative art pedagogy

Context

In 1978, Jarvie presented the case for standards of assessment being cultural (Fraser, J 2002 p56), that 'culture shapes and constrains even perceptions of colour, shape time and space.' In 2006, Art educationalists are engaging with a culture requiring 'reasonable adjustment', inclusion and widening participation, of the 11,865 undergraduates with dyslexia, 5.59% choose Creative Arts and Design.(HESA 2004). Students choose art
and design perhaps understanding that the rational process of art and
design is often akin to dyslexia in rejecting formulaic, linear thinking. Art has
a reputation for delivering holistic, ethnographic and portfolio led
assessment, yet remains wedded to traditional text for 20-30% of
assessment in many degree programmes.

Learners within the field of Art and Design are reputedly abductive, rather
than deductive or inductive, shifting paradigms as part of the art process.
Fraser claims 'designers tolerate uncertainty whilst working with incomplete
information' (FraserJ 2002 p52). Taking risks and using new methods are
integral to the craft as the second year of student handbooks often
demonstrate; 'thinking outside the box' is rewarded. Further, the rationale
for the dyslexic learner choosing art, design and creative practice is
underscored by the subject benchmarks for Art and Design (HEFCE 2004)
being the only national benchmarks which specifically acknowledge
dyslexia and the disproportionate number of students within this discipline.

Employers enthuse over oral skills and presentation (HEFCE
2005), enterprise learning outcomes praise presentation skills, 'talking up
the grade', presenting story boards or illustrative material and fostering self
promotion confidence. All skills industrial panelists claim are vital to
success in the creative industries. Art graduates need to 'hit the ground
running and talking'.

If 'accommodated assessment ' means ensuring validity in all aspects of
teaching, assessment and learning with a critic-theoretic stance that
promotes equity and student empowerment (Messick, S.J. 1989 p22), then
theoretically art is set to adopt 'the viva'. In spite of this, few staff supervise
and still fewer students opt for substantive 'accommodations'. The text-
based dissertation remains generally viewed as the medium to deliver the learning outcomes of Art programmes, writing appearing as assessment at 20 percent or more, culminating in the dissertation. This paper advances a discourse that aims to maximise the ability of the student to engage in academic life and present evidence in different forms, specifically 'the viva'. In Implementing this change and using the dyslexic student as the model, art educationalists may also enable other learners, who may share difficulties, albeit not as pronounced, to succeed. (Berninger, V. 2003)

References:

Fiske, E (1999) Champions of change: the impact of the arts on learning Washington Presidents Commission on ~Arts and Humanities


Higher Education Funding Council (2005) -Developmental Engagement Foundation Degrees, School of Media, London College of Communication University of the Arts London: Foundation Degree Media Practice -Industrial Panel


Journals

URL

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Higher Education Statistics Agency 2004  8.09.05