

Crafting connections: Interdisciplinary explorations of arts-based assessments in teacher education

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Our presentation emphasizes the potential for discovery in interdisciplinary work, arts-based enquiry and the scholarship of teaching and learning.

Our interdisciplinary arts-based enquiry explores the value of arts-based assessments in teacher education. Crafting connections through collage-making (Childs, Mapasa & Ward, 2020) was used as a method of enquiry to engage ourselves as the three participants in deep reflection, to answer the research question: What is the meaning of arts-based assessments in teacher education? Each of us drew from our experiences in our respective fields – philosophy of education, creative arts education, visual literacy, school-based learning, method of accounting and faculty management - to explore what we have learnt from using arts-based assessments in our teacher education spaces. Thematic analysis was used as data analysis method. Data analysis occurred in two rounds: first we analysed the data separately, and then we analysed it as a team through collective dialogue. Symbolic interactionism (Mead 1913; Blumer 1969; Stryker & Stryker 2016; Schwalbe 2020) and critical theory (Freire 1968/2018) fused to form a theoretical framework through which we interpreted the findings.

The findings demonstrated that (i) arts-based assessments required our students to engage in multiple levels of interaction during the act of creating. (ii) Arts-based assessments allowed students to add something of the Self into their creations, significant in this era of consumerism and AI gen technologies where the Self is often erased/irrelevant. (iii) Arts-based assessments created spaces for a physical and literal co-construction of knowledge, as Freire (1968/2018) suggests, thus providing a potential method in which to counter oppressive pedagogies. (iv) Arts-based assessments also seemed to allow students to view a topic/question/problem from different angles, enabling a more layered and complex understanding of topics, significant in a multicultural, multilingual and multireligious society such as South Africa. (v) We also found that arts-based assessments held many contradictions, which we will explore during the presentation.