Seeimg is believing: 
How the use of video can support the development of student teachers’ reflective thinking

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Given the importance placed on reflective thinking within Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and the accessibility of digital video technology our ESCalate funded research project set out to identify how video technology may support the development of student teachers. We agree with Loughran’s (2002) assertions that encouraging our students to reflect is not enough and that experience alone does not lead to learning. A group of 18 students in the final year of their undergraduate degree programme in Primary Education were paired up to plan, teach and evaluate a series of five enquiry-based science lessons during school placement. Each pair recorded video material of each other’s teaching during the second lesson from which they identified an aspect of their practice for development. Another recording of their final lesson allowed any progress to be identified. The students were required to edit their collection of video clips, which included video diaries of their reflections and references to relevant literature, into a final video outlining their reflective journey. Questionnaires, semi-

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Project page: Research project 2009: Using video for the identification and assessment of learning in initial teacher education: http://escalate.ac.uk/6306
structured interviews and the analysis of the students’ post-lesson evaluations written before and then after viewing their lesson were used to gather data.

We found that post-lesson evaluations written after watching the video recording differed significantly from those written straight after teaching. Evaluations based on the video included more evidence based judgements, made stronger connections between the student teachers’ actions and their impact on pupils and stated clearer intentions for future teaching. Using Larivee’s (2008) descriptors we classified two thirds of the additional observations as Level 3 (on a scale of Levels 1-4) ‘Pedagogical Reflection’ and concur with her view of the importance of mediation and support in developing reflective thinking.

The key advantages afforded by this use of video included:

- The opportunity to get a ‘pupils’ eye view’ of the lesson.
- The re-evaluation or confirmation of initial post-lesson impressions.
- Reassurance that the lesson was effective or ‘not as bad as I thought!’
- Multiple perspectives via shared viewing with tutor/teacher/peers.

The students found that the recording and analysis of the follow-up lesson and the video editing task transformed the usually passive process of evaluation into a more interactive, motivating and forward looking activity.

Our findings reinforce the identified potential for video to enhance detail, perspective and objectivity (Sherin and van Es, 2005) and encourage collaboration among communities of learners (Newton & Sorensen (2010), Rickard et al. (2009)). They also concur with Dewey’s key characteristics of reflection, as outlined by Rodgers (2002), as a rigorous, meaning-making collaborative process driven by a motivation for improvement. Encouraged by the positive feedback from our students, we intend to develop the use of video across other programmes.

References


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