

Using authentic assessment in teaching art – a SoTL study

Jana Luková

Historical Institute of Slovak Academy of Sciences/Comenius University Bratislava

Introduction

This poster presents the results from redesigning an art history course through introducing authentic assessment. Student evaluation, peer observation and examples of student work are used to evaluate if novel ways of learning helped students to achieve the course outcomes.

Learning of history of art has always been closely linked to material culture. However, due to obvious reasons, learning through working with originals has not always been possible, instead, teachers use various ways of presenting reproductions of selected artwork combined with frontal lectures. Aside from that, teachers use assignments that students complete as individuals, with relatively little space given to active learning via collaborative tasks, peer learning and class discussions.

Objectives

I was given the opportunity to innovate learning of MA students of art history using authentic assessment in three classes of the course Early Modern Period Drawing and Graphics at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Trnava.



The hypothesis of my research was that thanks to innovation in the form of access to original graphic works during class and appropriately chosen activities, students will be able to recognize the different graphic techniques (woodcut, engraving and lithography) that are needed in the description of the work in the final paper.

Authentic Assesment, Data Collection

Compared to the previous "traditional" format of teaching, I redesigned the course around competency-based education, personalized learning and peer learning. My goals were to increase student in-class activity, promote communication and cooperation between students. I have introduced a three-step class design, based on recognizing art techniques of original artworks and students writing a professional description of museum artifacts. For the introductory session, I brought to each lecture original prints created using a variety of techniques from the 16th-19th century and left them to students for examination for the remainder of the semester. During another class students worked in groups completing the assignment that trained them in recognizing art techniques. In the final class we convened with the curator in the National Museum of Slovakia, which offered students the opportunity to compare their skills with the expectations of a professional institution.



Collecting of data

Graphic techniques recognition activity - group work (1-2 hours)

Activity Give one, get one (1 - 2 hours)

Final paper - group work (3 hours)

Online feedback questionnaire

Educator feedback - observation sheet (2 - 3 hours)

Reflective teacher journal

Reflection after hospitalization

Results

Findings from the final authentic assessment task

In the final lesson, both groups mastered the activity of describing the artwork, and they identified the graphic technique accurately. The first group was able to complete 8 entries on the expert card out of 15 possible and the second group completed 14 entries. Group 1 completed the following records: dimensions, author of the work, title, art type, genre, inventory number, material, and technique. Group 2 filled in these records: dimensions, author of the entry, date of entry, author of the work, title, art type, type of work, genre, inventory number, dating, name of the institution, material, technique, and the space designated for the photograph of the object. Both groups mastered the basic and essential entries for the description of the work; the second group also filled in the blanks that the first group did not address and obviously examined the contents of the card more thoroughly. At the same time, they appeared more confident and relaxed in completing the content.

Conclusions

The results of my own and external observations, combined with other data sources, confirmed the hypothesis that authentic assessment can produce the expected outcome of being able to recognize basic 16th-18th century printmaking techniques and, together with mastered technical terminology, to master the description of an original work. Not all the expected outcomes were achieved, especially in increasing student-teacher communication, but there were only three lessons with a large time gap, which I consider one of the negatives of this research project.

The authentic assessment tasks could be an inspiration for other disciplines taught in the department, but it requires more teacher time for preparation, process management and evaluation of results. The strengths of my innovation were the close connection between the seminar topic and the opportunity to study original works whose mode of production was taught directly in class and my previous experience in the field. Other positives include the smaller number of students, which allowed for more focused work and the opportunity to respond to their current needs.

Literature

HULVAT, M. G. Active Learning in Art History: A Review of Formal Literature. In Art History Pedagogy & Practice, Vol. 2, 2017, s. 1 – 32.

Keerthirathne, W. Peer Learning: an Overview. In International Journal of Scientific Engineering and Science. Vol. 4, 2020, s. 1 - 6.

O'NEILL, G. – McMAHON, T. Student-centred learning: what does it mean for students and lecturers? In O'NEILL, G. – MOORE, S. – McMULLIN, B. Emerging Issues in the Practice of University Learning and Teaching. Aische readings, Vol. 1, Dublin. 2005, s. 27 – 36.

SEWAGEGN, A. A. – DIALE, B. M., Authentic Assessment as a Tool to Enhance Student Learning in a Higher Education Institution: Implication for Student Competency. In RAILEAN, E. (ed.) Assessment, Testing and Measurement Strategies in Global Higher Education, sine locus, 2020, 256 - 271.

Thank you your attention!

Mgr. Jana Luková

Doctoral student on the Historical Institut of Slovak Academy of Sciences Bratislava

lukova@gmail.com