

An Attempt to Get Communication Design Students to Reflect: A Content Analysis of Students' Learning Journals

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Abstract : Essentially, the intention of reflective journal is meant for students to develop higher-order thinking skills and to provide a 'space' to make their learning experience and thinking, making and feeling visible, i.e., it provides students an opportunity to evaluate their learning critically by focusing on the rationale behind their thinking, making and feeling. In addition, reflective journal also gets the students to focus on how could things be done differently—the possibility, alternative point of views, and opportunities for change. It is hoped that by getting communication design students to reflect at various intervals, they could move away from mere working on the design project and pay more attention to what they thought they have learned in relation to the development of their design ability. Unfortunately, a closer examination—through content analysis—of the learning journals submitted by a group of design students revealed that most of the reflections were descriptive and tended to be a summary of what occurred in the learning experience. While many students were able to describe what they did, very few were able to explain how they were able to do something critically. It can be concluded that to get design students to reflect is a fairly easy task, but to get them to reflect critically could be very challenging. To ensure that design students could benefit from the use of reflective journal as a tool to develop their critical thinking skills, a more systematic and structured approach to the introduction of critical thinking and reflective journal should be built into the design curriculum to provide as much practice and sufficient feedback as other studio subjects.

Keywords : communication design education, critical thinking, reflection, reflective journal

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