

The following is a critical evaluation of my second microteach that centred around explaining the basic definitions of story beats and how to identify them in both a script as well as film. Using Kolb's Reflective Cycle (McLeod, 2017) and elements of Brookfield's Critical Reflection (Brookfield, 1998) process, with the aim to identify strengths and weakness of the session, while also looking back the first session, seeing if I had acted on any action points that had been previously laid out. Finally, I will create a new action plan going forward into the next stages of my teaching placement, highlighting areas that need to be explored further and potential difficulties that may occur.

Following the positive feedback from the previous microteach, I came into the assessments with greater confidence and was willing to see the session as a chance to experiment with teaching strategies as well as presentation skills, rather than focusing on a fear of failure. More specifically, I wanted to use the time to take a session that stuck out from my previous degree (which in this case was 'Story Beats' (McKee, 1999)), and seeing how I could interpret the lesson and appropriate it into my budding teach style. This specific instance stuck out to me though the surprisingly simple nature of the subject area and, in combination with the lecturer using real world film examples to show how you could apply the material, it showed a different way to present story rather than the 'chalk and talk' approach that had been a majority of my academic year to that point. Saying this, there are some areas that I also feel were ignored or could have been expanded more and, as Brookfield argues, in order to be a critically reflective teacher, one can look back to our own previous experiences and learners and use it to inform our practices by highlighting what both stood out and what wasn't communicated well: *"Recalling Emotionally charged dimension of our autobiographies as learners helps us understand why we gravitate towards certain ways of doing things and why we avoid certain ways of doing things."* (Brookfield, 1998) For example, while I did like the way they applied the theory to film, it didn't seem relevant to our module at the time and skipped how to write them (which was to write a script), and instead jump way ahead in the filmmaking process, to a

point way more advanced than where we were at the time. So, to use my experiences as a starting point, I made sure to purposely introduce them more in the much simpler written format to easy learners into the subject area, rather than just dumping them at the deep end.

Was this a success? According to my written and vocal feedback from observing staff and students respectively, it was miles better than my overcritical nature would have me believe. Praised for the andragogical approach and the clear nature of the presentation, I seemingly communicated the subject area well by creating a “safe learning environment” (see APPENDIX A) that supported the learners. Looking towards the future, this concept of looking back towards my own experiences may prove extremely helpful during my placement, specially as a former student of the course. I’ve lived and breathed what the current learners are experiencing and can draw from the previous four year selecting not only positive learning experiences from staff old and new but also look at the negatives and try to build upon them for the student’s benefit.

One of my struggles with planning the lesson initially, was the application and relevance of cross cutting themes (Roubanis, 2015), that are appropriate for the subject matter. Despite being told numerous times the purpose that they provide within a curriculum, I was struggling to strictly identify what they are and what specifically counts a theme. Alonzi sums up in a simply explanation what a cross cutting theme and also provides examples in her article which, on first glance should have helped me in the completion of my lesson plan: *“Cross-cutting themes are additional issues or areas that intersect with the main project or can be easily integrated into the project without losing focus of the main goal”* (Alonzi, 2019). The issue with this and the samples she provides (gender equality, diversity, etc.) that none of them apply to lesson plan as they all appear to be broad, world-changing ideals, while my session seemed more self-contained with the mediums of film and storytelling. I could argue that microteach does promote literacy skills which could be an additional area to explore, (specifically with creative writing and how to get information across to the

audience), it still seemed to niche in comparison. It was not until I came across Wieringen and Atwell, however, did I see that this specialist concept could be an advantage, especially when focusing on craft-based subjects such as film and the arts. They argue that in vocational courses, this need for a more wholistic, sociological approach to cross-cutting themes can come secondary in comparison to the specific area being covered:

“In vocational education curricula are most frequently derived from some process of functional analysis, through examining the skills and knowledge required for a particular occupational profile and then deriving a list of objectives and outcomes, with greater or lesser participation and influence of social partners”

(Wieringen & Atwell, 2013)

Using this quite literally, the theme analytical thinking in the arts is such a key skill for not only identifying subject within real world artefacts but also, it allows an individual to take a look at their own work and see the faults, learn from the, and then improve as a practitioner. Looking back however, do I feel that my application of cross-cutting themes was appropriate? For the most part yes. Upon conducting further research after the session, I found out that I was being too narrow minded when thinking of themes that could apply for my lesson. For example, Locke and Locke argue that Media (Locke & Locke, 2013), could be put forward as an additional area that can be covered and, in retrospect, I could have easily applied that to myself as I specially look at film and filmmaking, one of the biggest media products available. For future sessions, I must stop overthinking about just the specific nature of the session and what can be applied and instead look at a broader picture that can incorporate a variety of other applicable area and themes.

Planning the session proved much more challenging in this assessment due to having to engage with the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) (HEA Academy , 2019), in more detail in addition

to the transferable skills that the session could have towards other areas (cross cutting themes.

While in the lats module I did follow and identify the different areas evident in the document and how I assumed my lesson plan had fit into them, I not only lacked details when giving the examples but also neglected some entirely. I feel this is evident most in my most recent lesson plan which almost doubled the number of standards that occur within my session and that within each highlighted area, I went into further detail, making sure to show clearly how I had met each one. This could be down to having the previous experience, reflecting on where I could have implemented them further in the past, but despite this, looking back, I feel as if I may have neglected the 'Professional Values' section in favour of the other two. Reading into the definitions of each area, the HEA state that when looking at Values, an educator is specifically looking at the ways that their teaching not only works within a higher education environment but also outside of the classroom through learners own professional development: *"The values are demonstrated through all our professional relationships and practices. The connections between values and practices need to be regularly considered over the course of an individual's career. This is an important part of being a critically reflective and enquiring professional."* (The General Teaching Council for Scotland , 2019) In retrospect, I could have found examples for other standards in this area as the whole concept behind my session was to apply theory to real world practice and how this could make them better practitioners. Specifically, when looking at 'V4', it talks about how to acknowledge how higher education works in a professional environment, I could have linked that to how I show the different stages a film goes through and where to apply beats as well as having my tasks at two different levels (independent and studio productions). By doing this, it not only shows the learner who is new to the subject where they are but, then transitions to where they could progress towards if they followed the subject area. Going forward, I think more time needs to be spent analysing the professional standards and their wording as, in my last two microteaches, I have glazed over important areas that (in hindsight) seem so obvious. It could be more beneficial to write them after I

have figured out the lesson plan so that I have a full picture of what I'm doing in and around the session, so that details don't get lost or looked over in the creation aspect.

When it came to the selection of teaching methods and picking appropriate assessment strategies, I could argue that although they proved successful, I could have been more experimental in my approach. By this, what I am specifically talking is approaching the session with more of a mindset that focuses on contemporary pedagogies instead of sticking to a traditional 'lecture then activity'. After research following the microteach, the concept of Creative Teaching would have not only given the learner a chance to have a more kinaesthetic experience but also allow for a more divergent experience. The concept behind Creative Teaching is to not only promote creativity amongst individuals but also gives them a chance to author their own material that they can then apply the theory towards. This then manufactures a more andragogical environment where, as the educator, you act more a guide, rather than more the convergent nature of other pedagogies. While still being a relatively newer style of teaching, it has shown successes with Brown and Rankin as they used it as a way to educate training midwife and the feedback reflecting in a wholesome approach that left them more connected to the subject: *"The participants cited meaningful learning related to issues that now made more sense to them in the context of practice. The participants' focus was more authentic regarding the learning experience when using this innovative and creative teaching method"* (Rankin & Brown, 2016). In terms of my session, instead of giving each student a real world artefact for them to break down and analyse, I could have used the time for them to create their own small story (no more than a few lines), and then asked them, using the theory, to then break down their work into individual story beats and deciding whether they were more physical or emotional.

If you were to leave it at that, creative Teaching seems like a confident way to approach pedagogy but, like all learning strategies, it has its flaws. Brown and Rankin went on later in their study to

discuss that, although the bulk of the learning is done at the hands of the students, there is still a heavy reliance on the educator to encourage them and facilitate an environment that is both open and creative: *“In this type of learning, the characteristics and abilities of the facilitator were seen to be crucial in stimulating and supporting students throughout the experience.”* In my session, this may have been slightly challenging as getting the learners to apply the theory to the existing script was straight forward as it had been curated to be full of beats but, when it comes to curating, it becomes an issue of confidence. If they are familiar with creating written material then it should be no issue but, as most of the group come from more visual-practical backgrounds, they may not believe in their own abilities and then it puts pressure on myself as well as the narrow time frame to try and get them all to the same, comfortable level. In future sessions and on the placement, it would be interesting to trial this approach as I believe that it could hasten the learning experience, especially with those who have a stronger background knowledge on creative writing and storytelling. It would just be that confidence level of on both the student and my abilities to encourage them which will only come with repeated experience.

Overall, was the second microteach a success? According to immediate assessment, vocal feedback, and personal belief, I think it was. I managed to construct an interactive and engaging session with a safe learning environment that encouraged adult learners from different educational backgrounds. For the next time that I must plan and deliver a session, the main goal for myself is to escape my comfort zone and attempt something different. I have to ditch elements of the chalk and talk formula that my education has been built on and see how I could apply more contemporary creative and interactive methods of teaching to ensure that I can not only engage learner's attention but also make the best use of the time as well. In addition, I have to take my time and consider all possibilities for not only the UKPSF but also cross-cutting themes, to ensure that I can cover as many areas as possible, instead of overlooking areas that seem obvious when in reflection.

When looking forward and deciding where I can go as a trainee teacher in terms of forging my teaching style, especially as I'm soon approaching my longest period of placement in the new year, I feel as if two other areas of Brookfield's model need to be taken into experience: "Peers" and "Scholarship". In the former, he suggests that we use our colleagues around us and their experience to help reflect on not only our own practice as educators but also how to deal with situations. This is incredibly interesting, especially being an alumnus of the course as I get to see my previous education from a whole new standpoint. I can not only now reflect as an individual but also get insight into the thought process behind the sessions that were designed for us, giving me an idea of whether they delivered or not and seeing how, maybe, I could change it to fit my style. The latter proves more challenging as it, mostly revolves around using theory to analyse our own performance as educators and how students might interact with us. Education as a subject is still alien to me so my fear is that I may look at a negative element or situation more personally rather than taking the time to analyse how I approached the session, tutorial, etc. from a theoretical standpoint as a teacher. As mentioned before, this element will only come with experience but, for the first few sessions, I have to make an effort to try not to take sessions that may not have worked so well so personally and instead look at them from a professional standpoint. To do this, I have to reflect on the areas that didn't go over as well as I's hoped, assess my own and other learning strategies to see why it happened, and then create action plans to try and tackle it for the next time.

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