

Principles of Teaching, Learning and Emergent Technologies

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This paper is a reflection on and critical evaluation of my first micro teach session. I have chosen to use the Gibbs (1988) framework as a guide for my process of reflection. This six-stage, cyclical framework hangs on the idea that 'insights gained naturally inform future practice' (Johns, 2013, p.13). Along with other staged, cyclical frameworks it has been criticised as being inappropriate for addressing the complex and holistic nature of reflection but it is considered to be suitable for novice practitioners (Johns, 2013). I will apply the framework in a fluid manner to each aspect of the microteach that I address. My critical evaluation will form part of my reflection and will address the strategies I have used for teaching, learning and assessment. I will consider the relevance of emergent technologies to the Fine Art subject area and explore a potential development of my microteach using social media. My reflection and evaluation will take into consideration observational feedback provided by both students and staff during the microteach as well as materials produced by learners during the session's activities. I will conclude by proposing appropriate targets for my own professional development as a teacher.

My first 30-minute micro-teach was scheduled for late afternoon on Friday 28th September. It was the final day of three days of micro-teaching and the learners were exhausted whilst simultaneously excited about the end of the three-day session. There had been a significant amount of chatting and some behavioural issues towards the end of the previous day so when an opportunity arose to switch to Friday morning I took it.

I began my session with a very short improvisation, acknowledging the students' tiredness after three long days of microteaching. My aim was to establish common ground and with it, mutual support. It was also a demonstration of empathy – one of several qualities that learners associate with emotionally intelligent teachers (Mortiboys, 2012). Unfortunately, my improvisation interfered with my flow and I stumbled over the first element of my lesson plan which was to ask the class a simple question to introduce the topic. My words were jumbled and I felt panic rise but thankfully I managed to reset and start over. This time my words came out in the right order and the lesson began. The learners were entirely forgiving but given my expectation of being nervous I should have practiced the beginning of my microteach out loud, in advance.

The learners seemed fully engaged during the pedagogic aspects of the lesson but, as anticipated, many of them chatted during the drawing activities. I had been concerned that this would impinge upon the learners' ability to 'be in the moment' whilst drawing. This, in turn, would hinder the learners' achievement of the learning objectives. Despite my fears, when I began the activities, I seemed to forget my fears about the learners chatting. I was

probably relieved to have got the initial part of the lesson out of the way without any major hiccups or perhaps I was just glad to see the learners drawing. I suspect that there were many things crisscrossing my mind and that my adrenaline was running high.

To maintain control and momentum I had micro-managed the latter half of the lesson by delivering three drawing activities in a stop-start fashion. After 5 minutes of one activity I would stop the class and give instructions for the next drawing activity. It is possible that my decision to break up the activities in this way might have been influenced by my past experience of running circuit training classes in a gym. However, if I had given the class 15 minutes to try all three activities I might have had time to relax and 'be in the moment'. But I was afraid to take the risk of them getting bored and disengaging. According to Knowles' andragogy as described by Mcclusky, Illeris, and Jarvis(2007), as adults mature they become more independent and self-directing. However, Knowles' andragogy has been criticised for seeing the individual learner as one who is autonomous, free, and growth oriented. His andragogy doesn't take into consideration how, for example, an individual is situated socially or how a person is a product of the sociohistorical and cultural context of the times (ibid.), Wallace(2014). Despite these questions surrounding an adult learner's ability to self-motivate, the essence of Knowles' assertion, in particular the requirement for teachers to facilitate learner autonomy, continues to feature heavily in contemporary learning literature alongside the need for teachers to better target the needs of individuals (Lunar Scott, 2015). In keeping with this, I will create more opportunity for autonomous learning in my lessons whilst exploring strategies for facilitating those who are less able to self-motivate.

Two male learners seemed reluctant to fully engage with the activities. They were sat on the same table. Both had subverted my instructions and had drawn 2-D images instead of the 3-D objects that I had asked them to draw. I clarified the instructions with them but was surprised to find that they both seemed to be defending their decisions to draw 2-D images. I felt as if they were rebelling against the activity somehow but I was simultaneously confused as I did not fully grasp their reasoning. I also felt a little disappointed that they seemed not to be cooperating. More importantly it meant that they wouldn't experience the activity as it was intended and would therefore not attain the learning objectives. I was also worried about the impact they were having on the experience of other learners.

The drawing activities required the learners to take a risk – to do something that they hadn't done before. According to the 'Jarvis model' of learning, at the start of any learning process is an incident that a person is unprepared to handle. This inability to cope with the situation unthinkingly is at the heart of all learning but if the individual chooses to ignore or dismiss the unease, no learning occurs (Mcclusky, Illeris, and Jarvis, 2007).

One of the two learners mentioned that they had only done engineering drawing previously. This admittance together with his mildly subversive behaviour would point, perhaps, to a reluctance to feel the unease; the sense of inability, that accompanies a learning challenge. I did not absorb the reasons given by the second learner for subverting the instructions. I knew from previous conversations that this learner is prone to anxiety and suffers chronic pain. It is possible that he copes with both pain and uncomfortable situations by jesting. I did not want to get drawn into banter with him as the lesson was on a tight schedule so after clarifying the task I moved on. In retrospect I could have listened more carefully to

understand the problem. Having hopefully ascertained the problem I could then have tried to address it, taking into consideration my prior knowledge of the learner.

According to Mortiboys (2012), listening is an integral aspect of emotional intelligence and emotional intelligence constitutes a third of what a teacher should be able to offer to learners alongside subject expertise and learning and teaching methods. A teacher can practice active listening skills such as paraphrasing, reflecting feelings, demonstrating empathy and managing silence but for any of them to work the teacher needs to be present in the moment, alert to how things are going and to the responses and mood of the group.

I struggled to 'be in the moment' during my microteach because I was nervous. I was afraid that my mind would go blank – it has done once or twice in the past when I've had to give presentations at work. Using pre-prepared notes is a great help but I feel that they are too strong a crutch. They are preventing me from taking a leap of confidence. When I present, I purposefully speak slowly and clearly. This helps. I even remember quite enjoying the point during the microteach when I shared some images of my artwork with the class and used it to introduce the key idea of the lesson. I even caused laughter when I told them a personal anecdote about my art practice. Personal anecdotes and humour are tools that I can deploy again, perhaps to a greater extent. I am at the early stages of training to be a teacher and now is the time to take a leap of faith and learn to trust myself. If I don't then I will be missing out on a confidence-building learning experience which will benefit me not just in teaching but in life. For my immediate purposes, focussing on being in the moment whilst teaching will help me to listen more carefully and respond more adequately to the learners, hence improving my relationship with them and their motivation to learn.

After the microteach I was not able to adequately assess whether the learners had achieved the learning objectives. One of my assessment strategies was to ask the learners a couple of open questions at the end of the class, before recapping the main points. But the responses I received were rather vague and the strategy felt contrived. Their responses didn't give me confidence that the learning objectives had been met. If I use that assessment strategy again I will think more carefully about the questions and how to deploy them. Whilst planning the lesson I had battled with the learning objectives, changing them frequently. The problem was that I was set on organising the lesson around the drawing activities but had never before considered their relevance beyond my own discipline. I now recognize that I didn't go far enough in my efforts to make the lesson relevant to all. According to Saavedra and Opfer (2012), lack of relevance leads to lack of motivation which in turn leads to decreased learning. I thought that the prospect of gaining drawing skills that would help learners to focus and therefore to learn, discover and experience new things would be enough to inspire motivation but I was wrong in a few cases.

The 'Teaching for Understanding' framework which is used by teachers worldwide emphasises the importance of choosing a generative topic (ibid.). A generative topic is a topic that has 'an important place in the disciplinary or interdisciplinary study at hand and resonates with learners and teachers' (ibid.). Subsequent aspects of the lesson must then be presented in the context of this generative topic. Students like this approach because it makes them feel as if what they are learning in the lesson is something that they can use (ibid.).

If I was to redo the microteach I would begin by getting the learners to consider the stresses and strains of existing in contemporary society; a topic that is relevant to all adults. I would focus on people taking time off work due to stress, the increase in mental illnesses and people not having time to invest in themselves. I would then get the learners to brainstorm ideas for coping with the demands of contemporary society, eliciting 'mindfulness'. An exploration of mindfulness would follow, with the hope of extracting ideas such as 'being in the moment', stress reduction, meditation and self-learning. I would then introduce the drawing exercises within this context.

In the few days running up to the microteach we were introduced to some ICT that can be used in the classroom. Many of the tools shown were specifically designed for traditional classroom environments such as the quiz tool, Kahoot. Having studied Fine Art in five different institutions, at both FE and HE levels I feel strongly that these teaching tools are unsuitable for the Fine Art teaching style and environment. The only ICT I used in my microteach was Microsoft Powerpoint. I do, however, see the benefits of using a more contemporary presentation tool such as Microsoft 'Sway'. It is particularly suited to Fine Art presentations as they tend to involve a variety of media types which come from a variety of sources including websites and social media. Sway allows for multiple content types to be embedded and scrolled through seamlessly. According to Harcrow (2016), it also displays HD images more vividly and is the easiest presentation tool to learn to use. The only issue for using it to present is that it is designed to be controlled from a tablet; a device that I do not own. In theory, however, using a tablet would open up interesting possibilities for mobility whilst presenting.

One suggestion made in my microteach feedback was that it would have been nice to finish the lesson with a 'show and tell' of the learners' drawings. I had considered but written this idea off because it didn't fit with one of the important points of my lesson, that the activities were all about the process and not about the final drawings. But, in retrospect I believe that I wrote it off too quickly. I could have told the students that we would be displaying all the drawings at the end and looking, as a class, for any interesting outcomes across the three activities. This may have acted as a motivator and discussion about the drawings would have been a good way of assessing achievement of the learning objectives.

To add interest to the lesson I might have asked the learners to use their mobile phones to photograph and upload their drawings to a pre-prepared, anonymous Padlet wall. For fun I could have given them the option to 'like' or rate the drawings of others. This could then have formed the basis for discussion of the three drawing activities and the lesson as a whole, giving me the opportunity for assessment. I have made a mock-up of this wall and included it in the Appendix. It is also available at <https://padlet.com/1302614/2457clg8xn7v> (password:pgcepcet)

In a paper written for UNESCO called 'The Futures of Learning 3: What Kind of Pedagogies for the 21st Century?', Cynthia Lunar Scott (2015) explores the move towards personalized learning in the twenty first century. She associates this approach with more collaborative,

interactive and project-based learning. An example of such an approach would be the dispersal of technology beyond IT rooms (ibid.).

In keeping with this approach, a potential development of my microteach would be to provide learners with iPads and Apple pencils and send them outside the classroom to do some mindful digital drawing of anything that interests them in the real world. Learners would be asked to upload their digital drawings to a pre-prepared Instagram account that all the learners have access to. Employing social media in learning can motivate learners to participate and to connect and collaborate with others, supporting shared knowledge building (ibid.).

The growing collection of mindful drawings would serve as a collective diary or archive of experience, learning and discovery and would also provide a means of assessing the learners' engagement with the project. This lesson would be interesting to conduct in partnership with one or more international educational institutions, especially countries with a very different architecture and culture. Hash tag conventions could be arranged in advance and shared with all partaking institutions. Learners could then, of course, comment on each others' work, ask questions and generally communicate via Instagram social media.

Targets for professional development (A1, A2, A4, A5, K3, K4, V1, V2, V3, V4)

One of my biggest learning points from this reflective exercise is the need to take more risk during my delivery of lessons. I am too reliant on notes and am not giving myself the opportunity to gain confidence by experiencing and overcoming the unease (Mcclusky, Illeris, and Jarvis, 2007) I associate with improvising in front of a group. Moving forward, I will edge out of my comfort zone by minimising my use of notes and by further developing strategies that I enjoyed such as the use of personal anecdotes and humour.

I recognise that my nervousness is preventing me from 'being in the moment' and listening properly to learners. Having learnt about active listening strategies (Mortiboys, 2012) I will attempt to deploy these strategies on a regular basis, both with individuals and groups.

Reflecting on my lesson caused me to associate my micro-management of learner activities with my previous experience as a circuit training instructor. I intend to create more opportunity in my lessons for autonomous learning. This will, however, need to be backed up with strategies for facilitating those who are less able to self-motivate. I also need to ensure that my lesson is relevant to all learners. The relevance that I established for my microteach was quite abstract in nature and may therefore have had a negative effect on learner motivation. In the future I will make sure that I use a 'generative topic' (Saavedra and Opfer, 2012) to make the learners feel that what they are learning is something that they can apply.

Finally, having initially felt cynical about the use of ICT in a Fine Art learning environment I have come to realise that it has great potential. In considering how I could use ICT to develop my microteach, I discovered exciting possibilities for learner interaction and collaboration on a global level.

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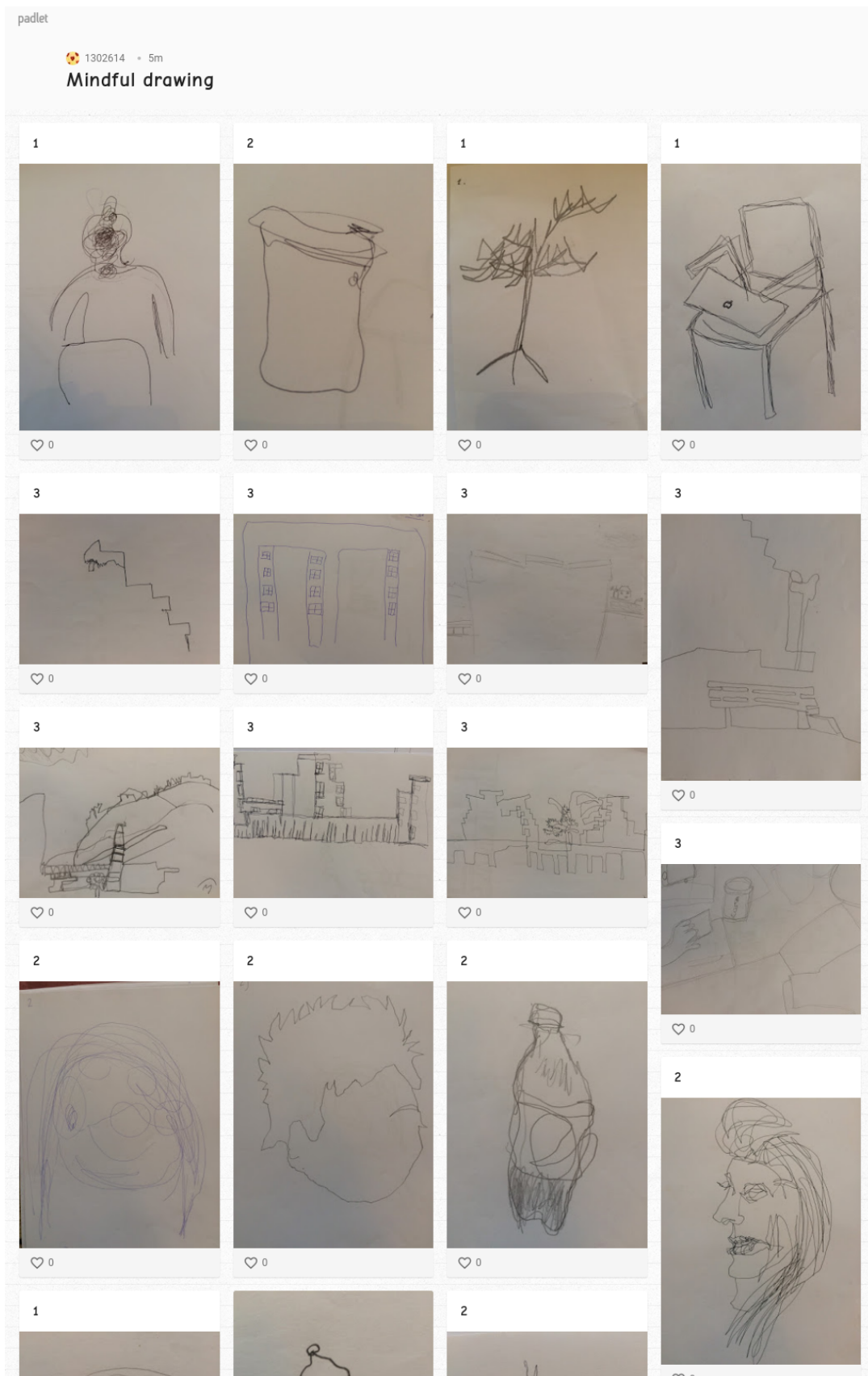
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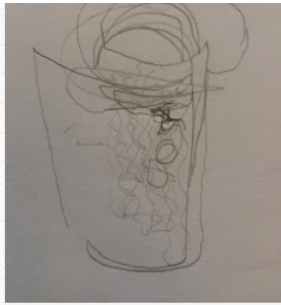
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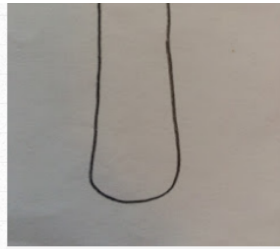
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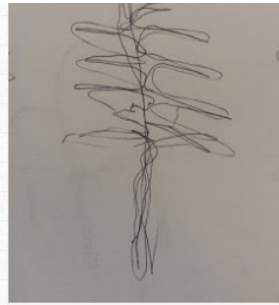




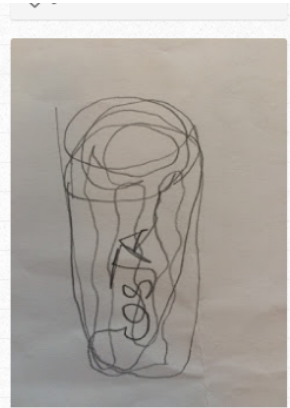
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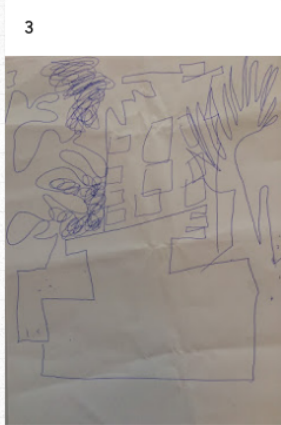
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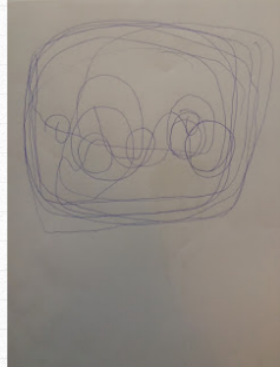


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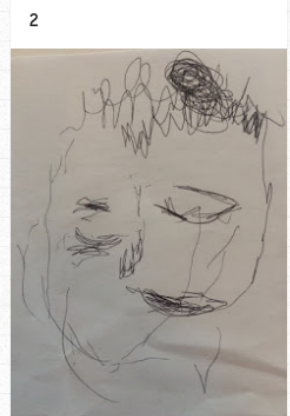


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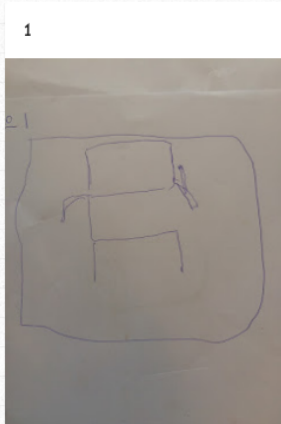
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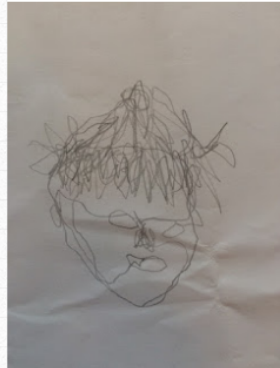
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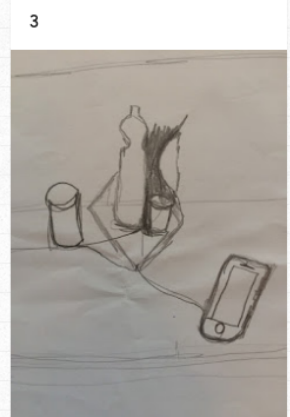
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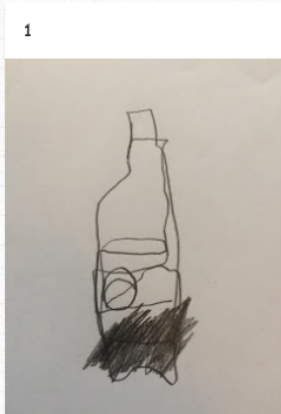


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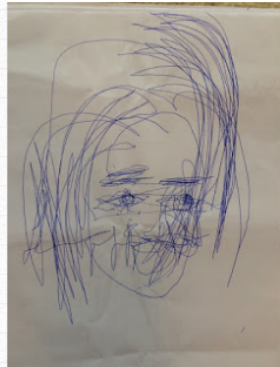


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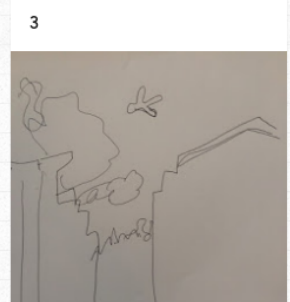
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