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PCET

The Teaching Toolkit 1

ECPT6003

Word count: 2540

PROFESSIONAL OBSERVATION REPORT. REFLECTIVE ACCOUNT

The below professional observation report is a reflective account where I am applying Gibb's reflection cycle from 1988 as a framework to reflect on my own teaching practice as well as other experienced lecturers. In this case, I observed two lecturers during three sessions for a total of six hours, please see appendices. The main focus during these observations was about the overall teaching and learning experience that was taking place and how lecturers applied principles of what it is considered best practice in the context of a learning environment. Using Gibbs' reflection model from 1988, my reflection's structure has this sequence: description of the event, followed by my initial feelings to then evaluate what was good and bad about the experience. I will continue my reflection by providing an analysis drawing from a range of theoretical approaches. Finally, and taking into account what I have learned from the experience, I will propose a conclusion and action plan for future professional development aligned to professional standards.

Teaching observation number one was a session on thesis development, which is part of a module called the independent project for BA photography and fine art students at level 6. The lecturer introduced the module assignment which consisted in writing a 5000 word thesis. To do that he went through the brief with the students, explaining the assignment and marking criteria. In that sense, making learners aware of what is expected from them. Students engaged and asked questions throughout. The lecturer incorporated formative assessment by asking students about their initial knowledge of writing a thesis. Furthermore throughout the session the lecturer

applied a wide range of teaching strategies and engaged learners through small group discussions and feedback to the overall group.

My initial thoughts and feelings after the teaching observation were very positive. I thought it was a very interesting, extremely engaging and dynamic teaching experience.

Evaluating the experience I realised that the lesson planning and the inclusion of a wide range of teaching strategies was excellent. Furthermore the delivery method, including its pace, and use of assertive language were deployed consistently and efficiently. In retrospect I could not find any major setbacks during the session.

What it follows is an analysis on the aspects stated above to unpack why the session went so well. Firstly, I am considering teaching strategies as part of lesson planning. According to Reece and Walker a teaching strategy is defined as 'a purposeful combination of student activities supported by the use of appropriate resources to provide a particular learning experience' (2007, p.26). Teaching strategies are important because they are one of the means in which facilitators can acknowledge the students' learning styles. For example Mumford and Honey (1986) identified four learning styles: activist, reflector, theorist and pragmatist. But as educators we need to take into account not only the learning styles but also the diversity of learners in the post-16 educational sector including but not limited to their academic and cultural background, age, gender identification, and learning difficulties. Therefore each learner will have a singular learning style that will have traits from Mumford and Honey classification but will be based as well on

learners' 'embodied identities' (Ashwin, et al. p.25). Therefore, as educators it is fundamental to include in our lesson planning a wide range of teaching strategies to cater to the different learning styles of our learners and promote an inclusive practice. For example, and in relation to this later point, Reece and Walker acknowledge how depending on the context of what it is that it is being taught and the learners background a set of strategies is more appropriate than others (2007, p.26). Therefore it is key to know our learners and their contexts to be able to tailor the teaching strategies to their needs. It is useful as well to keep in mind as Ashwin et al. emphasise in *Reflective Teaching in Higher Education* (2020) that 'student's learning is always provisional' (p.25). Some of the factors that influence students' learning in higher education are their previous experiences, and the course material (Ashwin et al., 2020, p.35). During my observation I realised how the lecturer applied some of these principles throughout the teaching and that was one of the reasons why it worked extremely well with the learners involved in the session. For example, during the session I noticed that the lecturer knew the students names. I also had the impression that he had known the students for a long time, which was later confirmed. Within the teaching strategies it is worth reiterating how in this case the lecturer kept the students at the centre of the learning experience by using a mix of strategies including, formative assessment, lecture, and small group discussions. We can relate this to Ashwin et. al when they state the need to use and 'approach learning as dialogue in all teaching-learning contexts' (2020, p. 257), which by extension we can refer to the dialogue created through the small group discussions and exercises throughout the session.

Secondly, and still in relation to teaching strategies, assessment and feedback, the lecturer included formative assessment at the beginning of the session asking students about their initial knowledge about the thesis. When it comes to feedback and feed forward according to Race (2019, p.4) one of the factors that underpin successful learning is receiving feedback. In this session there were small group exercises where this was put into practice since the learners had to feedback to the whole group and receive feedback in response by the lecturer and colleagues. In that sense, already putting into practice the idea of doing research that they will go and develop during the module. The lecturer provided plenty of examples covering different writing styles, so then learners can identify and apply to their thesis.

Thirdly, if we consider the delivery method, pace and use of assertive language. In this specific case this was a senior lecturer and you could notice how he had experience of being in similar situations so he was calm and assertive throughout the session. Reece and Walker define assertion as the capacity of being 'able to express our thoughts, opinions and feelings whilst at the same time allowing others to do the same' (2007, p. 295). This has the effect of increasing 'respect with the communities of colleagues and students' (Reece and Walker, 2007, p. 295). That was exactly what I experienced within the classroom.

In conclusion, after this teaching observation and reflection I realised two important aspects to improve on my own practice. Firstly, the inclusion of more teaching strategies during my lesson planning. Secondly, after this observation I noticed that I needed to improve my pace of delivery and confidence since that would create a more engaging learning experience.

Teaching observation number two was with the same lecturer as observation one. In this case the session was on contemporary photographic practice focusing on the 'mischievous image'. This was part of a module called contemporary photographic practice for BA photography students at level 4 and which has mostly a practice component. The session was a brief that the students used as a reference to then develop their own photographic practice. The lecturer began by contextualised mostly his practice in relation to the mischievous image and used as well examples of other practitioners whose work aligned to that idea.

Again, similarly to observation number one my initial feelings after the session were very positive. The session was very interesting, vibrant and engaging.

My evaluation of the session was that there were very good practices applied throughout. For example, this was already noted for observation number one, the lesson planning for this session and the use of a variety of teaching strategies was excellent. Including formative assessment and feedback and group work throughout the session. Again, similarly to observation number one the delivery method, its pace and use of an assertive but open communication style were very good. A new aspect that was different from observation number one was the fact that the lecturer began the session by introducing his work. This worked extremely well in terms of content and also empathy with learners.

In my analysis for this second observation I will not focus on lesson planning, teaching strategies, pace of delivery and feedback. Since these are all aspects that I have dealt with in observation number one and have been applied in a similar way

by the same lecturer in this session. Therefore there are no significant changes in that respect. The new factor in which I will base my analysis is the introduction of own practice as part of the teaching. When it comes to this point is key to acknowledge the importance in teaching of professional development and in this case the fact that this lecturer is currently doing a PhD and using his research findings in the classroom. In this sense this was a good example of how 'Effective teaching and learning depends on the scholarship and learning of all those educators who teach and research to support the learning of others', (Ashwin et al., 2020, p.76). Therefore the lecturer ongoing learning and engagement with research are reflected in the classroom. Not only this contributes to enhance the lecturer expertise and skills but it also translates into a vibrant learning space where the students can visualise some of the possibilities for their future practice.

In conclusion, after this teaching observation and reflection I realised the importance of incorporating my own research and ongoing development as part of the curriculum and teaching.

Teaching observation number three was a guest lecture about the work of the German photographer Ursula Schulz-Dornburg (b. 1938). This lecture was open to BA photography and fine art students at level 4, 5 and 6. The session was divided in two parts. The first one was a lecture/introduction to the work of Schulz-Dornburg and the second part was a workshop. The learners had a small break in-between the two parts. For the second part level 4 learners gathered in small groups to discuss their work in progress about an imaginary exhibition. The guest lecturer engaged

with all the groups and had the chance to discuss their ideas since that was her area of expertise.

My feelings after observation number three were very positive and it was another clear example of a successful learning experience.

My evaluation of the session is based mostly on two very good teaching practices. Firstly, providing a small break to learners in-between the session, and in that sense giving space to digest some of the information provided. Secondly, the importance of inclusion of different voices as part of taught programmes.

After the lecture the students had a break which provided time to briefly digest some of the content and relate it to their imaginary exhibition proposal. In that sense this is another clear example of good practice and in line with one of the five factors that underpin successful learning according to Race: '*digesting* is about establishing a sense of *ownership* of what has been learned' (2019, p.8). After the break students discussed in groups and with the guest lecturer about their exhibition proposal. This is an example in practice of Reece and Walker's claim that adults 'learn best when they are actively involved in the learning process' (2007, p.8). For example, and as seen in the session, working with their 'peers offers students the opportunity to discuss ideas and to gain an insight into the way other students understand these ideas' (Ashwin et al., 2020, p.80).

The second good practice is the importance of having multiple voices and opinions within the classroom. Again this was very evident in this session, since the learners

were actively engaged in the conversation with the guest lecturer and seemed to enjoy the opportunity to have that exchange. Therefore creating a culture where dialogue, different voices and opinions are encouraged and where 'trust and openness is crucial' (Ashwin et al., 2020, p.76).

In conclusion, after this session I realised about the importance of providing breaks so students have the opportunity to digest some of the information provided as well as the crucial role of having different voices within the classroom.

ACTION PLAN FOR FUTURE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

As a result of my observations on other lecturers and my own teaching experience I have conclude that these are the main areas that I need to tackle as part of my future professional development:

1. Inclusion of more teaching strategies during my lesson planning. To achieve this I am modifying during the summer my current lesson plans to incorporate more group discussions and feedback opportunities throughout the sessions, keeping students at the centre of the learning experience. These modifications will be implemented in my teaching in the next academic year. This area is aligned to the following professional standards: A1 Design and plan learning activities and/or programmes of study; A3 Assess and give feedback to learners.
2. Improve pace of my delivery method. This will be done in two stages. The first one is by revising during the summer some of the recordings from my own sessions and make notes in relation to pace of delivery to improve and take forward for the next academic year. The second stage is gradually gaining more experience over the next academic year, which will support and improve my delivery method and pace. This area is related to the following professional standard: A4 Develop effective learning environments and approaches to student support and guidance.

3. Use of my own research and professional development as part of my lectures. I will action this point by including during the summer the findings from my own research and professional development as content of my lessons. Actively participating in professional learning networks. For example, I attended a two-day conference on photography and the dark-room in June, and I will incorporate that material as part of teaching in level 4. In this sense, I am using research to improve my practice. This area is related to the following professional standards: V3 Use evidence-informed approaches and the outcomes from research, scholarship and continuing professional development.
4. Inclusion of a plurality of voices. By introducing more guest lectures as part of the teaching programme and giving the opportunity to students to engage with them. I am currently action this point since I am organising the guest lectures for the next academic year which I am planning to have on a regular basis every three weeks, so they are part of the learners taught programme. This area is aligned to the following professional standards: V1 Respect individual learners and diverse learning communities; V2 Promote participation in higher education and equality of opportunity for learners.

To conclude, and as stated in part one of the assignment for the teaching toolkit module, despite the ongoing transformation of the learning environment Gibb's reflection model from 1988 is still proves to be a crucial tool in my learning journey as a practitioner. In this case through observing other experienced lectured and by

reflecting on the process, it has allowed me to identify areas of development as a practitioner and the steps required to attain them.

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Teacher Observation Form



Teacher	RD - observation 1
Date	16/11/2022
Group	BA Photography and the Arts, BA Photography and Visual Activism, BA Fine Arts (Level 6)
Topic/Context	Thesis Development
Notes on the lesson:	
-In this session the lecturer introduced the assignment for the module which consisted in writing a 5000 word thesis. -The lecturer went through the brief with the students, explaining the assignment and marking criteria, and allowed them to interfere and ask questions. -The lecturer incorporated formative assessment by asking students about their initial knowledge about the thesis. If they had done one in the past, if they enjoy writing essays, etc. In that way he had a sense of the learners context. -The lecturer asked students a set of questions such as what is research, where to find information, type of information and credibility? To answer those questions he gathered students in small groups that had to feedback to the whole class. So even though this session was mostly a lecture, the lecturer used a wide range of teaching strategies making the learners the centre of the experience. -Thesis structure with examples. Breaking down the thesis in smaller units so it is more comprehensible and approachable for the students. -The lecture was well prepared and lecturer was very professional and knowledgeable.	

What I have learned:

- **Lesson planning:** The lecturer was well researched, organised and the material was relevant to the session.
- **Delivery method:** Once again the crucial importance of using of a wide range of teaching strategies that contribute to keep students engaged and at the centre of the learning experience. Working mostly with small groups and mixing students from both photography and fine arts to break down learner participation dynamics. Creating in that way an active learning environment.
- **Pace of delivery:** Experienced lecturer who is very much in control of when to introduce content, group work and break times.

Targets to improve my own practice (mapped to professional standards):

- **Lesson planning and inclusion of a wider range of teaching strategies.** They can be aligned to the following UKPSFs': A1 Design and plan learning activities and/or programmes of study; K1 The subject material; V2 Promote participation in higher education and equality of opportunity for learners.
- **Pace of delivery to create more engaging lectures.** It can be mapped to the following professional standards: K4 The use and value of appropriate learning technologies; K5 Methods for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching.

Teacher Observation Form



Teacher	RD - observation 2
Date	22/11/2022
Group	BA Photography and the Arts and BA Photography and Visual Activism (Level 4)
Topic/Context	Contemporary Photographic Practice - The Mischievous Image
Notes on the lesson:	
-The session was a lecture/brief that the students used as a reference to then develop their own photographic practice. -In this introductory session the lecturer contextualised his practice and that of other artists in terms of thinkers as well as ideas that inform it. -Even though the setting was a lecture with a slide presentation the lecturer incorporated a wide range of teaching strategies. For example, at the beginning of the session he started by using formative assessment, that way the lecturer knew the students initial knowledge around the topic. Also throughout the session the lecturer incorporated questions and asked the students to quickly discuss in groups to later feedback to the whole class. By doing that he created a learning experience where the students were at the centre. -The lecturer was very professional and knowledgeable about the topic addressed. He used throughout the session an assertive communication style.	
What I have learned:	

- Include own practice and research as part of the lecture, stimulating learners' interest.
- Pace of delivery: experienced lecturer who is very much in control of when introducing content and elements. Creating a thoughtful and captivating lecture.
- Delivery method: the use of a wide range of teaching strategies that contributes to keep students engaged. Creating in that way a dynamic learning and teaching environment.
- Assertive language: Use of inquisitive, speculative language to address aspects of contemporary practice but with a secure and assertive language creating a bond of trust with the students.

Targets to improve my own practice (mapped to professional standards):

- Include my own practice as part of my teaching material. This can be aligned to the following UKPSFs: A5 Engage in continuing professional development in subjects/disciplines and their pedagogy, incorporating research, scholarship and the evaluation of professional practices; V3 Use evidence-informed approaches and the outcomes from research, scholarship and continuing professional development.
- Lesson planning, delivery method including pace and the use of a various teaching strategies were already covered in the previous observation form. They can be aligned to the following UKPSFs': A1 Design and plan learning activities and/or programmes of study; K1 The subject material; V2 Promote participation in higher education and equality of opportunity for learners.

Teacher Observation Form



Teacher	LR - observation 3
Date	14/03/2023
Group	BA Photography and the Arts and BA Photography and Visual Activism (Level 4, Level 5, Level 6). BA Fine Arts (Level 4, Level 5, Level 6).
Topic/Context	The in Between. A guest lecture about the work of the German photographer Ursula Schulz-Dornburg (b. 1938).
Notes on the lesson:	
-The session was divided in two parts. The first part was a lecture mostly on the work of the work of the German photographer Ursula Schulz-Dornburg and the second part was a workshop. -In the first part of the session the lecture began by introducing her own practice and background before moving into a more in-depth talk about the work of Schulz-Dornburg. -The lecturer made accessible the content of the presentation by using familiar language and providing a wide range of examples to help students visualise the extensive archive or collection of images that Schulz-Dornburg accumulated over her lifetime. -The lecturer focused them on exhibition display strategies since that was the focus of the workshop. -For the second part of the session the students gathered in small groups to discuss their work in progress about an imaginary exhibition. The guest lecturer engaged with all the groups and had the chance to discuss their ideas since that was her area of expertise.	
What I have learned:	

- **Introduction:** the lecturer began the session by introducing her own practice. Considering that this was a guest lecture and therefore the lecturer does not work at this institution, it worked extremely well since learners were not familiar with her. In this specific case it served as an entry point for learners to relate to the lecturer journey.
- **Examples and familiar language:** the lecturer made use of familiar language and did not use unnecessary jargon. This helped to make the content accessible to different levels since learners were a mix from level 4, 5 and 6. The lecturer provided a wide range of examples that helped learners to visualise the ideas that she was talking.
- **Reference list:** the lecture not only provided written references throughout the presentation following Harvard referencing conventions but she also had a list of references at the end of the presentation. That way students had the opportunity to further their research or knowledge if they were interested in the topic.
- **Relevance and currency of the content.** In this case the lecturer focused on the work of an underrepresented female photographer.
- **In the second part of the session** the students enjoyed the learning opportunity of discussing in small groups and with the guest lecturer about their ongoing assignment for an imaginary exhibition. Learners appreciate other professionals opinions. The importance of having different opinions about the same work.

Targets to improve my own practice (mapped to professional standards):

- **Avoiding the use of jargon or very technical language especially for learners at level 4, since it is the beginning of their learning journey. It can be mapped to the following professional standard: K2 Appropriate methods for teaching, learning and assessing in the subject area and at the level of the academic programme.**
- **Relevance and currency of the content within the subject area. For example by focusing on underrepresented artists and being inclusive to a diversity of voices. It can be mapped to the following professional standard: K1 The subject material .**
- **The importance of facilitating learners' access to second opinions, which can be mapped to the following professional standards: V1 Respect individual learners and diverse learning communities; V2 Promote participation in higher education and equality of opportunity for learners.**