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Ollin, Ros

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Records of teaching observations : boundary objects between different communities of practice

Ros Ollin, University of Huddersfield

Introduction

In initial teacher training (ITT) programmes for post-compulsory education (PCE), delivered by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), teaching observations have always been pivotal in determining whether the trainee can achieve professional status as a teacher. Recent policy developments for ITT in the Lifelong Learning Sector (LLS) place greater emphasis on trainee teachers' classroom performance. More observations are now required, with grading being introduced, linked to the inspection grades used by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted). In a context where ITT programmes must demonstrate clear conformance with national standards and, are themselves subject to inspection by Ofsted, teacher educators are under pressure to prioritise aspects of teaching likely to contribute to successful inspection results. This presents a dilemma for teacher educators believing in broader notions of professional development, acknowledging teaching as a complex process, and in the need for critical engagement with a range of pedagogical theories and practices.

There have been critiques of the role of observation in Ofsted inspections (O'Leary, 2006) and discussion on the pressures experienced by teachers being observed (Case et al, 2000). However, the significance of teaching observations as a site of struggle between

atomistic and complex notions of professionalism rarely features in critical debates on the nature and purpose of teacher education. Yet teaching observations on programmes of ITT for the LLS occur in the boundary between the worlds of teacher education and the social practices of the college workplace. It is here that the values and beliefs of different communities of practice may conflict or may be subsumed into the discourse dominant within that arena.

This paper argues that the conduct of teaching observations represents a set of culturally-determined social practices, where development and assessment are in a state of tension, reflecting the priorities of different communities of practice concerned with teacher training. Definitions of 'good' teaching are determined through government discourse (Coffield, 2008) and the paper argues that these notions are constrained by what can be 'seen' (and hence evidenced) by a classroom observer. But in that process, the voices of practitioners and teacher educators presenting alternative views of teaching are silenced. The observation proforma used to shape and record the observation is a cultural artefact which mediates the way that teaching is conceived and how particular aspects are valued at the expense of others. Hence in one sense it represents a dominant discourse about teaching. However, it also acts a boundary object in that it is subject to different interpretations by the various stakeholders operating within that space. By exploring the design and use of observation proforma and its purpose for different stakeholders in education, the paper prompts the following questions:

- What can the design and use of teaching observation proformas tell us about how 'good' teaching is conceived (and who conceives it)?

- What purpose do teaching observations have for the different stakeholders directly or indirectly involved?

- How do teaching observations link to different models of professionalism?

- What alternative approaches to teaching observation might support non-technicist models of professionalism?

Finally, the paper suggests two approaches to observation which acknowledge teaching as a complex activity involving processes often difficult to see, and in which both teacher and observer have a voice in the meanings which are generated.

Context

In the last decade, government reforms for the Lifelong Learning Sector have aimed to give teachers in this sector greater professional parity with school teachers. These include the development of Lifelong Learning UK national standards for teachers tutors and trainers in the LLS (LLUK, 2007), requirements to achieve a qualification based on these standards and the introduction of qualified teacher status for the LLS (QTLS) through registration with the professional body, the Institute for Learning (IfL). FE colleges as well as schools are inspected through the government inspectorate, Ofsted. Ofsted is also responsible for inspecting the quality of programmes of initial teacher training (ITT) run by HEIs.

Government policy has emphasised the fundamental role of observation of teaching practice (DfES, 2007) in developing and ensuring the quality of teaching and learning

demonstrated by trainee teachers. In order to obtain LLUK endorsement for their programmes, all trainee teachers need to be observed four times a year on a two year in-service programmes of ITT. At least one observation a year needs to be made by a specialist mentor from the workplace, the others are made by University tutors. In – service trainees, who are already employed as teachers in the LLS, for example in a college of Further Education (FE), may be subject to Ofsted teaching observations in two ways. Firstly as trainees on an ITT programme, where the emphasis will be on the soundness of judgement displayed by the observing tutor, and secondly as college employees, where the results of an inspector's observations will provide evidence towards the overall college grade awarded.

With grades reflecting colleges' own quality assurance and improvement processes, internally conducted college observations of teaching are often based on the Ofsted grading system and act as practice for the real inspection. In effect, in steering particular approaches to observation, managers are trying to 'see' through Ofsted's eyes, including attempting to gauge what Ofsted considers a good lesson. This percolates through college policies, staff development and the teachers who work full or part –time. A large educational agency, which supplies part-time teachers to colleges, has published guidance for its staff on preparing for an Ofsted inspection, gearing its advice to what college managers will expect. In this document, it reiterates Ofsted's definition of teaching:

> A planned process to modify attitude, knowledge, skill or behaviour through learning experience to achieve effective performance in an activity or range of activities (Protocol National, 2007, p. 5)

The notion of performance, i.e. observable and providing evidence, is key to this definition. Protocol appears to signal this, in their suggestion that the teacher should:

Create opportunities for the learners to *demonstrate* their skills and knowledge

(Protocol National, 2007, p. 10) (*my italics*)

The Inspector needs to see evidence of teaching and learning, so that they can provide evidence to justify their judgements about the grade awarded. However, the need to 'demonstrate' a prescribed set of teaching skills may lead the teacher to carry out activities which are easily identifiable as teaching, rather than the more subtle set of pedagogic actions and relationships which underpin more complex notions of professionalism (Case et al, 2000).

The Ofsted guidance notes for inspectors (2007) suggest that when observing teaching, inspectors should be assessing 'the outcomes' for the learners in terms of their progress and personal development (including their attitudes and behaviour). It has been argued elsewhere how this imposes a discourse practice which 'defines inspection knowledge' (Lee et al, 2000, p. 137), whilst offering only a spurious reliability, in that individual inspectors' also judge according to *personal* definitions of good teaching (Penn, 2002; Campbell and Husbands; 2000; Case et al, 2000). To play safe, trainee teachers, led by college managers, may tend to demonstrate a limited range of easily observable, standardised teaching behaviours. In this context, real tensions exist for teacher educators. Do they work to develop questioning and critical teaching professionals, able

to cope with change, enabling them to explore more risky, creative approaches to pedagogy? If so, the teaching observation is a site of experimentation and dialogue. Or do they encourage trainees to play safe and, in effect, rehearse them in being observed for inspection? If so, the teacher educator themselves adopts the 'normalizing gaze of the inspector' (Case et al, 2000, p.614). This dilemma indicates the various values, beliefs and social practices unerpinning the different, but mutually-dependent communities of practice concerned with the professional training of teachers.

Overlapping communities of practice

Wenger (1998, 2007) identifies three aspects of a community of practice which distinguish it from a mere community where people live or work side by side. Firstly it has an identity derived from a shared domain of interest, secondly, members of the community of practice interact, share information and learn from each other. Thirdly, the relationship is embedded in practice, not in mutual interest, and this shared practice generates a set of mutual understandings, practical and intellectual tools and ways of 'doing things' or 'talking about things' on which members of the community draw. Wenger acknowledges that communities do not have set boundaries and that people are often members of multiple communities. For example, HEI teacher educators have membership of the professional teacher education community, the wider education community comprising all sectors of education, as well as participation in the shared practices of the HEI itself. In addition, the professional education community draws on members from other types of institutions and bodies than the HEI, for example

organisation training and development or the police service, which have their own cultures and belief systems.

All of these are impacted upon by the predominant values and discourse of government policy, embodied in cultural artefacts such as national standards, inspection reports and the teaching observation proformas designed to provide the most accessible evidence of conformance. These represent the imposition of one way of seeing and describing complex and multi-faceted aspects of teaching, which gradually become 'common sense' to members of different educational communities. This imposed view is difficult to challenge, because its nature as a cultural construct is not recognised or understood and the discourse in which a particular way of seeing is couched acts as a barrier against alternative perspectives which might challenge conventionalised social practices (Bourdieu, 2002). However, when one moves between communities, opportunities arise for adopting different perspectives which may enable these practices to be questioned and alternative practices suggested.

Observation proformas: mediating devices and boundary objects
In socio-cultural theory, individual thoughts and emotions are constantly mediated by the cultural resources available. These mediations shape the meanings and perspectives within which people make sense of the world and their place within it. Vygotsky's work (1978) considers the role of collectively developed signs and symbols as mediating devices, where tangible objects are collectively assigned meanings as artefacts or tools affecting the ways that individuals think, feel and behave. Cultural artefacts have been

developed over time and have different meanings and purposes for different social groups.

Different perspectives on social practices, can occur through using experiences in one community of practice as cultural resources to inform participation in a different community. In this case, it could be expected that the teacher educator, working in an HEI might use HE values and beliefs as a resource to challenge restrictive definitions of 'good' teaching (Coffield, 2008). A consideration of artefacts which are used across communities can illuminate aspects which are 'taken for granted' and provide a means of considering how they might be different. Boundary objects are representations which are sufficiently vague to be adopted by these different communities, with differing meanings attached by each group. They are:

> ….objects that both inhabit several communities of practice and satisfy the informational requirements of each of them (Bowker and Star, 1999, p.16)

The ways in which different communities interpret and use the artefacts or procedures throws light on the nature of the communities themselves. Wenger (1998) suggests that boundary objects are based, not on participation, but on reification which he defines as:

> "the process of giving form to our experience by producing objects that congeal this experience into 'thingness'" (1998, p. 58).

Teaching observation proformas - the documented representation of teaching observation processes - are a means by which different communities of practice with a vested interest

in the quality of teaching, communicate across their boundaries and 'congeal' particular set of experiences. The meanings and uses ascribed to proformas give an insight into the different conceptions of professionalism which underpin those communities.

Notions of professionalism

Professionalism can be characterised in many different ways. For the purpose of this paper I will use the 'managerial' and 'democratic' notions of professionalism (Sachs, 2000) and will also include what I will call the 'epistemological' notion of professionalism.

The changes in policy and practice in the FE sector have given rise to a new form of so called 'managerialist' professionalism, driven by performance targets, defined by national standards, located within a culture of accountability and defined through the discourse of competency. (Hyland, 1994; Shain and Gleeson, 1999; Avis, 2003; Avis and Bathmaker, 2005; Gleeson et al, 2005). The role of the teacher educator within this value system is to produce professionals who conform to the required standards and support organisations to meet their targets. In this notion of professionalism, teaching is simplified, captured in easy to evidence 'descriptors'.

Educators rejecting a managerialist perspective have defined teacher professionalism in two ways - democratic and epistemological. Democratic professionalism is characterised through its relationship to ideas of social justice and critical pedagogy, where

professionals play crucial roles in increasing and improving democratic participation in public affairs. The role of critical pedagogy in encouraging the questioning of power relationships and the cultural dominance of certain values and beliefs, has the aim of transforming the inequities of those relationships (Bathmaker and Avis, 2005). In this context, the notion of professionalism is one of continuous adaptation and the outrunning of complacency.

> Instead of following 'a set formula for doing things right…to constantly question whether such formulas amount to doing the right thing' (Bathmaker and Avis, 2005, p.16)

Operating within this professional frame, where the purpose of education is paramount, the role of the teacher educator is to encourage a questioning of dominant discourse and practice in order to generate alternative ways of 'seeing' and working.

In contrast, 'epistemological' professionalism asserts the subtle and complex nature of the teaching process itself, underpinned by the complex knowledge held by expert teachers. This acts as a counterbalance against the easy capture of 'good teaching' operating within managerialist discourse. It recognises the 'intuitive, creative, highly personalised nature of teacher knowledge' (Robson et al, 2004, p. 187) and the largely 'tacit' nature of that knowledge (Eraut, 1994). At the same time it acknowledges that teachers need to develop some rational and articulated knowledge basis for the pedagogical decisions they make (Eraut, 1994). Operating within this professional frame, the role of the teacher educator is to encourage awareness of the complexities of teaching

and learning, explore the meanings ascribed to different aspects of the process and develop understandings of what 'being a teacher' involves.

The notion of reflection which underpins most programmes of teacher education is intended to allow for this articulation. The ability to be a 'reflective practitioner (Schön, 1983) underpins many notions of professionalism in the education sector. However, a trainee's reflections following an observed teaching session are often constructed around a simplistic reflective model more akin to a process of lesson evaluation, which covers such questions as:

What did I do?

What went well?

What would I improve for next time?

Using Mezirow's (1981) analysis of Habermas' three 'knowledge constitutive categories', this model represents a technical level of reflection and is related to basic teaching competency. It also serves managerialist systems, linked to Ofsted requirements, to show evidence of continuous monitoring and improvement. However, one might expect a teacher educator to be concerned in raising the level of reflective practice to the practical, social level (making sense of the subtleties of human interaction) or to the emancipatory level, leading to 'transformative action':

……emancipation from forces which limit people's rational control of their lives

The design and use of teaching observation proformas

This section considers the design and use of teaching observation proformas, what they tell us about how 'good' teaching is conceived (and who conceives it). Since the 1950's programmes of FE teacher training have had some component where the tutor observes the trainee teacher teaching within the real working environment of an FE college. The traditional pattern of observation includes a pre-meeting between the tutor and the trainee, usually just before the class, where the tutor gains some background knowledge about the class to be taught and is given a copy of the trainee's plan for the session and any accompanying resources. The tutor then sits in the classroom and observes the session making notes, which are then discussed with the trainee once the class has ended. The tutor may write on a standard proforma whilst observing, or may use their notes to complete a proforma and give this to the trainee at a later stage. The completed proforma will form part of the trainee's documented evidence that they are able to teach at least to a satisfactory level.

Compared to the present day, teacher training programmes in the 1960's and 1970's had more flexibility as to how they were delivered and the types of documentation that were used. Hence the teaching observation proforma could be designed in a number of different ways. The two main types of proforma were either what I will term 'open' or 'closed' in design. At that time, a number of institutions used the 'open' design.

The 'open design' proforma

Characteristic of the open proforma was the minimum of written direction for the observer. Typically at the top there would be spaces for the name of the trainee (who would usually be called 'student'), the time, date and location of the observation, the name of the class, the topic and a space for the name and signature of the observer. Otherwise the form would be blank, and would be completed according to the tutor's own priorities and criteria for the observation. Some tutors favoured a chronological approach in which they noted down each significant (to them) event as it occurred. Other tutors took a broader approach, covering a range of different aspects of the teaching such as communication with the learners or use of particular resources. Sometimes tutors would take the opportunity to focus on a particular aspect of teaching and cover this in detail.

When considering the semiotics of this proforma it appears to signify some kind of autonomy on the part of the tutor to decide what to include, possibly idiosynchratic, but possibly based on the development of a set of shared meanings with a team of colleagues also teaching on the programme. These, in their turn, might be developed from some kind of vague consensus from the teacher training community at large about 'the things that we look for when observing a teacher'. However, in the implementation of this particular proforma design, the power lies mainly with the professional tutor who interprets and selects from a range of possibilities of what might be covered under the conceptual umbrella of 'being a teacher'.

The 'closed design' proforma

Unlike the open design, the closed design is divided into sections, with each section having a heading determining what will be observed and hence what can be commented on. In 1960's and 1970's, the headings were determined by the institution or awarding body offering the teacher training programme and tended to be fairly similar from one institution to another. A typical set of headings would include:

Planning and preparation

Structure of lesson

Teaching methods

Teaching resources

Communication

General comments

In the past two decades a number of external factors have impacted on the ways that 'good teaching' is constructed. These include the incorporation of FE colleges in 1992, leading to increased centralised control of funding, Ofsted inspections within a common inspection framework, together with the introduction of national standards for FE lecturers - all of these operating within a government policy framework of increased centralised intervention. These in their turn have impacted to some extent on the nature of what is considered important to be observed and, subsequently, observation proformas have changed or expanded to include these altered circumstances. Whereas it was only

teacher training providers who conducted classroom observations, now college employers

organise teaching observations as part of their own internal processes for ensuring the

quality of teaching and learning and to prepare staff for inspection. As a result, many

college observation proformas reflect the areas identified in Ofsted's Common Inspection

Framework. In programmes run in partnership with colleges, it is often the college based

course tutor who will conduct the observation for the college and for the HEI programme.

Sometimes, these tutors will also be part-time inspectors for Ofsted (Ofsted, 2006). Little

wonder then, for economies of scale, there has been pressure on HEIs to ally their

documentation and systems of observation more closely with those of the colleges,

enabling:

> ..a coherent approach to the process of observation and record keeping to ensure
> that they are meaningful and not repetitive (DfES, 2007)

To meet successive government initiatives, teaching observation proformas may also

include reference to some or all of the following:

- Learning objectives/outcomes
- Assessment
- Inclusivity
- Differentiation
- Activities matched to different 'learning styles'
- Diversity and equality
- Literacy, language and numeracy
- Learner learning and achievement
- Mapping to core curricula
- Subject specialism
- Learner activity and participation
- Learner achievement of goals and outcomes

Without discussing each of these separately, two points are significant here. Firstly that each of these areas for observation and feedback are derived from some aspect of government policy, either directly or through the priorities identified through Ofsted. Secondly, that all these concepts are socially constructed and the discourse used reflects a particular set of values and beliefs about the nature of learning and of education as a whole. Hence, for example, definitions of 'literacy' from a government perspective may focus on an individual deficit model, contradicted by academic work on 'new literacies' (Barton and Hamilton, 2000); the popularity of 'outcome-based' pedagogy marginalises pedagogies based on different theories, values and beliefs about learning; the notion of 'subject-specialism' derives from a particular view about the way that knowledge can be compartmentalised.

Changes in the design of observation proformae over the last few decades reflect the shift in power from the individual tutors and the HEI teacher training providers to the employers and the government. This can have the effect of predetermining what is important to observe, but also guides the nature of the feedback written on the proforma, and framing the post-observation discussion.

The purpose of teaching observations for the different stakeholders directly or indirectly involved

So far I have discussed the observation proforma as an object in its own right and suggested that some of the changes that have occurred in its design over the last few decades. Whereas it was once a document located in and designed by HEIs, to which

only tutors and student were privy, the changing role of the teacher now locates the observation proforma in a far wider network of relationships.There are a number of stakeholders to whom this evidence is directly or indirectly important and the teaching observation fulfils a range of purposes:

For FE colleges –

- To confirm competence of teaching staff or to identify those at risk
- To prepare for inspection
- To ensure staff are <u>professionally trained and accredited</u>

For Ofsted

- To confirm college is meeting expected national standards for provision
- To confirm college has adequate internal QA processes

For trainee

- To get feedback to give confidence that they are of an acceptable standard
- To get help in development of skills and understanding of teaching
- To link with teacher training course

For HEI teacher educator

- To ensure trainee is (or is working towards)an acceptable professional standard
- To help support trainee to develop increased skills and understanding of teaching
- To link learning in the workplace with learning on the teacher training course
- To develop a critically reflective teacher capable of questioning the status quo
- To develop a <u>teaching professional</u>

The underlinings indicate conceptions of professionalism which may differ according to the values of the stakeholder. The teacher educator located in an HEI is operating from an HE cultural context, in which professional training and the ethos of higher education can themselves be in tension, but where critical thinking is supposed to be valued and where a range of different notions of professionalism may co-exist. The managerialist notion of professionalism driving the HEI ITT endorsement and funding is exemplified by the standards for teacher training, where trainees need to be successful in meeting these standards in order to achieve membership of the lifelong learning teaching profession. The teacher educator in this context, has the professional and economic obligation to use the teaching observation as a means of confirming competency in some of those standards. The proforma is designed to be as closely aligned with the requirements of the relevant standards, which addresses the perspective of the government and LLUK stakeholders. It may also be designed to take into account the employer's quality assurance perspective, driven by the Ofsted common inspection framework. However, if operating also from other more complex notions of professionalism, a 'values schizophrenia' may occur, where teachers' own judgements about 'good practice' are impacted on by the rigours of 'performance' (Ball, 2004).

This may also impact on the teacher educator conducting an observation. The two underlined areas in the list highlight potential tensions between different meanings, values and beliefs on professionalism, where the boundary between HEI and FE workplace may becoming a frontier zone, patrolled by the guardians of national standards. Although boundaries represent complex networks rather than binary transitions

(Edwards, 2005) it is inescapable that physically at least, the teacher educator on a teaching observation, crosses the threshold into different territory. Hence, we might ask the question – when the HEI teacher educator crosses into this zone, do they tend to leave the HE culture behind and adopt the customs, language and social practices of the 'host country' where a culture of managerialist professionalism has to predominate to secure funding and continuation?

The observation process

The 'acculturisation' occurring through transition into a different cultural world can shape observations conducted against categories defined through the dominant discourse, and in the way the subsequent feedback is handled. Using the observation agenda set by the form design the teacher educator may neglect to observe and feedback against other things because in some sense other things *do not exist*. An interesting example of this is given by Gleeson et al (2005) where a teacher desribes an observation in preparation for a college inspection, where the senior tutor could not give feedback on session because no '*teaching*' had taken place:

> It was amusing to be told that as no teaching had taken place she (the senior tutor) could not give me adequate feedback on the 'lesson' as a whole, although she could not fault the activities, the students' commitment and dedication to the task, and the outcome was clearly that a high level of learning had taken place.
>
> (Gleeson et al 2005, p. 454)

Even when the rest of the HEI ITT course and the teacher educators themselves operate from a democratic and /or epistemological professional base with tutor inputs, classroom discussions and course assignment work to encourage trainees to question education

practice and develop creative approaches to teaching, it is here in the boundary space where the teaching observation takes place, that the espoused theory (Argyris, 1987) and theory- in- practice of teacher educators may be at their most dissonant.

This paper argues that teaching observations in the current education climate are driven more by the needs of employer and government stakeholders and by performative notions of professionalism. If we step 'outside the frame of 'normal' practices' (Ghaye, 2005, p. 183) and question conventionalised acts, it is important to envisage alternatives in practice. So, if a teacher educator operates within notions of 'epistemological' professionalism based on complex 'tacit' knowledge, what might teaching observations look like? What might the teacher educator 'see' apart from those aspects of teaching that are traditionally observed , constrained by the categories of the observation proforma? If a teacher educator operates within a framework of emancipatory professionalism, how might feedback be given which actively promotes critical reflection rather than low level evaluation?

'Silent pedagogy' and epistemological professionalism

It has been suggested that teaching is usually characterised (and observed) in terms of teacher initiated activity or in terms of overt teacher interventions - in other words performance which provides evidence. This does not allow for those 'intuitive' and 'creative' processes and positionings which characterise good teaching. 'Silent pedagogy' (Ollin, 2008) concentrates on vocal, verbal, visual, spatial, kinaesthetic silences and reflects subtle and complex aspects of teacher's knowledge of the formal learning

environment. These are pedagogical skills which are less recoverable and recordable than overt vocalised behaviours, and involve teachers 'abstaining' from measurable performances of 'initiating' and 'intervening'. It also considers ways in which learners interact or participate which are not manifested in talk or overt face to face engagement with others. These may be construed as passivity by observers in that they fail to conform to underlying preconceptions about the nature of participation and interaction. However, if classrooms are for learning and deep learning involves concentrated thought, the question arises- if a class was deep in thought for all of a lesson, would the teacher pass an observed teaching assessment? This leads to the question, what else might be 'seen' other than overt performance? The following list suggests some examples of this 'silent pedagogy':

- The way the teacher organises the environment without speaking through the sensitive use of listening, management of different spaces for silent activity, shifts in position relative to the learners
- How the teacher allows time for thinking, absorbing, integrating ideas, creating, within the class through pauses, or engaging the students in non-vocal activities such as writing or using the computer
- Ways in which the teacher communicates non-verbally through visual or kinaesthetic means
- Whether the learners work silently and comfortably in the company of others for considerable periods of time

- Sensitivity of the teacher to learners who do not talk or overtly participate, recognising that this may be their legitimate preference rather than an indication that they are anti-social or are not learning anything

The detail of what is 'seen' can open a space for dialogue, where the trainee and teacher educator articulate and develop meanings about what occurred in the session. This would involve a mutual construction of knowledge about teaching and learning, developing understandings about the complexity of contingent and contextual practices in the classroom, rather than operating from an imposed discourse linked to a simplistic view of teaching.

Emancipatory reflection and democratic professionalism

At the beginning of an ITT course, it is appropriate for post-observation feedback to be fairly directive, with development points at a technical level. However, later on in the course, discussion need not revolve around mainly confirmatory feedback, but around real questions (i.e. not false-directive questions such as 'Do you think a black pen would have been a better colour for the flip chart?). So, how might feedback be given which actively promotes critical reflection rather than low level evaluation?

Here the trainees own powers of observation are as important as the formal observer. For example, these questions may prompt discussion:

1. What do you know about each individual learner in this class?
2. What have you observed about each of them today?

3. What has each person learned today? How do you know?

4. What other cultural perspectives might you have included today?

5. What if you were teaching this to e.g. a group of Somali students, one deaf student, a totally different age group – how would you alter what you are doing?

6. What factors about this session do you think are within your power to change and which aren't? Why?

7. What are your real aims for these learners? How does what you have done today fit in with (or subvert) those larger aims? How do these aims reflect your own values as a teacher?

8. 'Blue skies thinking! If you had <u>no</u> constraints on the teaching of this session, what would it have looked like? Where would it have been held? What would the learners have been doing?

In this discussion, the dialogue between trainee and teacher educator has the potential for challenging, scaffolding and discussing ideas and understandings about the nature of teaching, learning and the role of the teacher. As such it allows for the development of democratic, rather than managerial professionalism. As with the example related to silent pedagogy, the unequal positions of power between trainee and educator are minimised in favour of a more equal dialogue - although it would be naïve to suggest they could be eliminated entirely.

Conclusion

In the context of this paper, a key issue for teacher educators is how far the complexity and criticality characteristic of the HE environment transfers into the real work context. In particular, how far the teacher educator, once they cross the boundary into the workplace, temporarily adopts the values and beliefs of the employing stakeholders at the expense of the values and beliefs they have left behind in the HEI?

The way that boundary objects such as observation proformas are used can signify this abandonment - delineating what 'teaching' is to be observed by the use of externally-prescribed categories, creating an agenda to talk about teaching, and limiting notions of development to performative improvements within those categories. Furthermore, as concepts themselves can be boundary objects, what is signified here is something even more fundamental, that is, a temporary (at least) shift in perception of the nature of teaching itself, from something that is frequently elusive and intuitive, to something that is easily encapsulated and articulated. In the processes of this transition, teacher educators themselves become 'shape shifters' in their movement from one context to the other. In this context, what is easy to observe is valued over the tacit knowledge manifested in complex social practices, and the voice of the observer silences the voice of the teacher being observed.

Considering teaching observations as boundary objects raises questions about the ways in which teacher educators moving into the workplace environment may unconsciously replicate managerialist notions of professionalism, which in the HE environment they might attempt to counteract. If part of the role of HEI teacher educators is to develop

teachers who are creative, critical and questioning practitioners, with some understanding

of the subtle and complex nature of the teaching process, then an area for research and

further development should be how approaches to teaching observations could be more

compatible with that ideal.

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