

Learning to teach – learning to ‘look’

A ‘viewing frame’ for observing teaching

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Introduction

How trainee teachers learn to teach has been dominated by the idea that the “knowledge of teaching is acquired and developed by the personal experience of teaching” (Munby, Russell, and Martin, 2001, p.587). The assumption being that it is when teachers are on teaching practice they learn how to teach. Of course, this is an important part of how new teachers learn how to teach, though I am also interested in the value of the pre-teaching practice phase and how this contributes to their knowledge of how to teach. Specifically, I have become interested in the contribution teacher educators’ use of modelling teaching strategies and behaviours can make to how trainee teachers practice and in particular the role of “learning to look” (Powell, 2016) as a way of learning to teach. Influenced by the painter David Hockney’s (2014) claim that “teaching people to draw is teaching people to look”, my assertion is that learning to teach starts with “learning to look”.

Glazzard, Denby, Price (2014, p10) recognise the potential of learning to teach by looking when they assert “one of the best ways [for trainee teachers] to learn effective teaching and skills is to see others apply such skills competently and professionally.” However, implicit in this statement is the assumption that trainee teachers know how to observe their teacher educator, or another teacher, when they start their course. This assumption has been largely fed by Lortie’s (1975, p.61) claim that by watching almost “13,000 hours” of teaching by the age of 18 all student teachers have undergone an “apprenticeship of observation”. However, these “observations” were as learners and they were there to learn a subject and pass an exam, not learn how to teach. As such, they were not “apprentice teachers” learning to teach.

Lunenberg, Korthagen, and Swennen’s (2007) work on modelling emphasises the value of this important aspect of teacher educators’ pedagogy, though they also acknowledge that it is not always effective as a strategy. This raises an important question for us as teacher educators: how do we teach trainee teachers to observe our and others’ modelling? Some suggest using videos (Star and Strickland, 2008) and others a lesson observation pro-forma from the course to develop this skill. I have developed a Viewing Frame.

Why a Viewing Frame?

My thesis involved me working with a team of further education-based teacher educators to explore their use of modelling within their practice. Early on it became clear that their trainees did not always notice the modelling of teaching strategies or behaviours and we discussed how we might address this. One of the teacher educators suggested that trainees needed a viewing frame, the visual equivalent of a



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writing frame, to scaffold their observation in a class. Based on this suggestion, I developed and piloted what is now the Viewing Frame in my own teaching and have subsequently shared it with others to gain feedback on its effectiveness as a pedagogical resource for teacher educators. The Viewing Frame comprises of vertical and horizontal columns. The vertical column lists in chronological order the activities of a class, the four horizontal columns are a series of questions based on the four forms of modelling identified by Lunenberg, Korthagen, and Swennen. (2007). For example, the question “What are David’s “sayings, doings and relatings”?” in column 1 invites the trainees to record any implicit modelling they notice. Examples of how trainee teachers might complete Column 1 and 4 are also provided to suggest what to look for.

Figure 1 presents an example of the Viewing Frame. You will notice that some of the columns are shaded out and this is intentional. I learned early on that trainees could only focus on completing one of the columns in any class and that it was best to start off with the first column. The decision to invite trainee teachers to notice the “sayings, doings and relatings” of their teacher educator, or another teacher, is informed by Kemmis et al.’s (2014) claim that practices consists of these three actions. Kemmis et al. (ibid) suggest that what we say mirrors the ideas of the cognitive domain; what we do reflects the actions of the psychomotor domain; and how we relate to others reflects the behaviours of affective domain. It seems to me that trainee teachers should notice all three of these elements if they are to learn how to teach. When using the Viewing Frame, I also share my lesson plan with my trainees to help them see into my pedagogical planning and decision making before and during the class.

The Viewing Frame is proving popular with teacher educators in the Netherlands and has resulted in me writing a paper with Anja Swennen on [the role of “learning to look” within a pedagogy of teacher education](#), which has been published in Dutch in VELON’s journal, Kennisbasis.



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Figure 1: Example of a viewing frame

Activity	Column1: What are David's sayings*, doings** and relatings***?	Column 2: What teaching decisions has David made? What other options might have been available?	Column 3: How suitable is the teaching strategy David is using for my own teaching?	Column 4: What theories of learning might explain David's practice?
Before the class	Starter activity			Value-expectancy theory of motivation Gagne's 1 st level of learning: gaining attention Classroom management Modelling
Sharing aims, outcomes and overview	Sharing the aims, outcomes and overview of the session			Introducing a lesson Behaviourism Constructivism Value-expectancy theory of motivation
Review of starter activity				
Lecture on "learning to look"				
Activity on "learning to look"				
Activity on "learning to teach"				
Lecture on "learning to teach" and modelling				
Recap and end of the session				



***Sayings** are what David says and the ideas he uses in the class and might include: use of the language of teacher education and learning to teach and explaining his thinking and teaching. Kemmis et al. (2014) suggest that what we say mirrors the ideas of the cognitive domain

****Doings** are what David does and might include: writing on a wipe board, using the computer. Kemmis et al. (ibid) suggest that what we do reflects the actions of the psychomotor domain.

*****Relatings** are concerned with student-teacher relationships and might include: how David speaks to a student teacher, where he stands in relation to his student teachers, how he listens to contributions from individual student teachers and then responds. Kemmis et al. (ibid) suggest that how we relate to others reflects the behaviours of affective domain

Notes:

When using the Viewing Frame, I also share my lesson plan with my trainees to help them see into my pedagogical planning and decision making before and during the class.

Only get your student teachers to focus on one column at a time in any class. Start off with Column 1, once your student teachers are good at noticing then they can start consider the application of your modelling to their own teaching (Column 3). Next they can look at Column 4 and finally come to Column 2.



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